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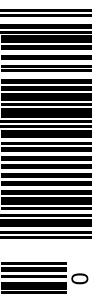
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what moves you



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MATÍAS AGUAYO: INTERNATIONAL MAN OF MYSTERY

The end of 2009 may have left us feeling a bit tense and unsettled, sure, but we can't deny that it was one of the better years for music in recent memory. Luckily for us, that stream just kept on flowing right into 2010. Whether it was the staying power of Pictureplane's sensually dark take on diva-dance-pop alongside Neon Indian's clunky synth symphonies, or forthcoming electronic psychedelia from Toro Y Moi and friends (all of whom are featured in this month's Brothers from Another Planet story), there's a solid continuum linking the last great bits of 2009 with the upward prosperity of 2010.

Ay Ay Ay, the second LP from cover star Matías Aguayo, which also landed at the end last year, is yet another record that wouldn't let up. As such, we went in search of the Chilean house producer-vocalist-DJ-Latin playboy (who keeps residences in both Paris and Buenos Aires) to see just what cultural touchstones inform his latest opus and his burgeoning Cómeme label. In fact, Parisian photographer Bastien Lattanzio even tried to persuade him and the Kompakt team to let us shoot him in a tuxedo amongst a cohort of scantily clad ladies (which would've been a pretty great—albeit admittedly sexist—first for an *XLR8R* cover)—but alas, no dice. You'll have to settle for whatcha got here: classy looks for a classy fella.

In that regard, we've loosely themed Jan/Feb "the portrait issue," as many of this month's articles feature some classic-style portraits. As well as Lattanzio's captures of Matías Aguayo in Paris, Jörg Gruneberg offers us a gorgeous look at Beach House's Alex Scally and Victoria Legrand in their native Baltimore, and NY's Olivia Wyatt risked limb and lens to grab some incredible Polaroids of 13 different tribes in Ethiopia (check *XLR8R.com* for some exclusive video, too!).

Shooter Josh McNey also got up close and personal with Bok Bok and L-Vis 1990 during their stay in New York, shortly before London writer (and *FACT* magazine editor) Tom Lea sat down with the pair to discuss their quickly expanding club night and label, both of which fall under the Night Slugs umbrella. If you haven't already, make sure to watch our exclusive UK vs. US taste test that we conducted with these young nighthawks. They run blind comparison tests on everything from Whoppers and Maltesers to Heinz and Bush's Best Beans (truth be told, this last one was a slightly unfair test since the *XLR8R* camping stove could only heat the Bush's before the propane fumes knocked us all out. Whoops.), all for our amusement. But what's sure to keep us even more entertained is the solid stream of hot bass and house tunes that they promise to keep releasing in the year to come.

Oh-ten is no doubt shaping up to be quite the year, so much so that we've already got most of the March/April issue planned and packed with yet-to-be-heard hotness. Stay tuned!

—Ken Taylor, Editor

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ON THE COVER

Matías Aguayo, shot in Paris by Bastien Lattanzio

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TOM LEA



Tom Lea helps run the London-based FACT magazine, where he occasionally takes time out from hounding contributors over deadlines to write a monthly column on the UK and beyond's post-garage, post-dubstep, and post-the-rest-of-it scene. He's also co-promoter and a resident at FACT's club nights, where, in the past, they've persuaded the likes of Sinden, Cooly G, and Hot Chip's Joe Goddard to come down and show off their wares. He interviewed L-Vis 1990 and Bok Bok for this month's Slug Life feature.

factmagazine.co.uk

SCOTT BARRY



Scott Barry is physically advanced and extremely coordinated. In addition, he has unusual body-and-space awareness for someone his age, paying attention to potential dangers and a general carefulness in his surroundings. He is currently attending the MFA program at California Institute of the Arts. His work has been exhibited internationally and featured in various publications including Nieves, IDN, and Beautiful Decay. As SacredMtn, he illustrated this month's Brothers from Another Planet feature.

sacredmtn.com

OLIVIA WYATT



Olivia Wyatt is a photojournalist and filmmaker living in Rockaway Beach, NY. She is currently a multimedia producer for Magnum In Motion at Magnum Photos. Her work has been published in National Geographic, Slate, Spin, Stash, Tiny Vices, and Elle. She just returned from Ethiopia where she documented tribal music for her first feature-length documentary, scheduled for distribution by Sublime Frequencies upon completion. Her Polaroids from that trip appear in this issue.

MICHAEL HARKIN



Michael Harkin is a freelance writer based in Oakland, California. He's written extensively about the Bay Area music scene, helps put together all-ages shows in San Francisco and the East Bay, and is currently compiling a print zine to be released in 2010. He wrote about recent True Panther signee Glasser for XLR8R.

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CORRECTION: In our last issue, we incorrectly priced the Roland Ax-Synth at \$79.99; its actual MSRP is \$1999.99. Whoops!



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L-VIS 1990 AND BOK BOK'S BLIND TASTE TEST + NEON INDIAN'S GUIDE TO AUSTIN

Late last year, London chaps **L-Vis 1990** and **Bok Bok** took a trip round these parts, and stopped off at the **XLR8R** office for a blind UK-vs.-US taste test. Whether it's Maltesers and Whoppers or Downtown Brown vs. Newcastle Brown, you may be surprised—hell, they were!—to see which brands they prefer.

Then, just in time for your trip down to South By Southwest, we hit up **Neon Indian's** Alan Palomo (who splits his time between Brooklyn and Texas) to give us the lowdown on his favorite haunts in Austin. Study up so that you're not left wondering which BBQ is the most authentic of the lot when you're nursing your first of the week's hangovers.

See all the madness at XLR8R.com/tv, and come back every Tuesday for new episodes, including recent shows with **Javelin** and **Claude VonStroke**.

NEW CONTENT EVERY DAY AT XLR8R.COM

Check out music news and features, free MP3 downloads, and reviews updated every day, plus photo blogs, music videos, free PDF versions of *XLR8R*, and a whole lot more at XLR8R.com.

XLR8R'S "WHERE WILL YOU BE IN 2020?" CONTEST

SNAG THE DJ CONTROLLER OF THE FUTURE, ALONG WITH SOME HOT NEW MUSIC!

2010 marks the beginning of a new decade, and hopefully it will prove to be one full of prosperity, excitement, and sweet, sweet music. So let's take this opportunity to look forward. Where do you see yourself, say, five years from now? How about 10?

In 200 words or less, we want to know where you hope to find yourself in the year 2020. No need to be practical. Share with us the hopes, dreams, and plans for world domination that you aim to accomplish in the next decade. The most interesting entries will net copies of Matias Aguayo's *Ay Ay Ay* (Kompakt), Beach House's *Teen Dream* (Sub Pop), Toro Y Moi's *Causers of This* (Carpark), Neon Indian's *Psychic Chasms* (Lefse), and Pictureplane's *Dark Riff* (Lovepump United), with the grand-prize winner also picking up an EKS Otus DJ controller, one of the most versatile and reliable controllers available today. The Otus interfaces with

PODCAST



MOTOR CITY DRUM ENSEMBLE, JUBILEE, FLOATING POINTS

Stuttgart's Danilo Plessow (a.k.a. **Motor City Drum Ensemble**) is a fan of classic Detroit techno—naturally—but, as this exclusive *XLR8R* Podcast mix shows, the man also has an affinity for old-school Chicago house, not to mention vintage soul and disco. Its the kind of mix for which Ron Trent and Ben Klock both make the cut. While you're there, you'll also want to check out new sets from the likes of New York's **Jubilee**, the Audiophile-featured **Floating Points**, and London's **Greena**, the next young buck to creatively make sense of the constantly splintering sounds of the hardcore continuum.

Get your dose of can't-miss hotness and sign up for our weekly podcast at XLR8R.com, where we feature exclusive mixes from all across the spectrum, including new sets from **Shortstuff**, **Shlohmo**, **Martin Kemp**, and more.

XLR8R.com/podcast



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER NO.130

Nite Jewel and Dam-Funk's exclusive Tune in an Afternoon

More Artist Tips from Dixon and General Elektriks

BLDGBLOG's favorite sound installations of 2009

HEALTH's full list of studio gear

Holy Ghost's full interview transcript

[XLR8R.COM/130EXTRAS](http://XLR8R.com/130EXTRAS)

LOOK FOR THE XLR8R.COM EXTRAS ICON

This issue is filled with online extras, including extended interviews, photo outtakes, audio clips, and videos. See them at [XLR8R.COM/131EXTRAS](http://XLR8R.com/131EXTRAS)



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FLOATING POINTS



PHOTO VENT FURY

WORDS TOMAS PALERMO

A YOUNG UK COMPOSER CONNECTS THE DOTS BETWEEN DUB AND SCIENCE.

Twenty-three-year-old Londoner Sam Shepherd is all over the map. Literally. When I contacted the busy producer, DJ, and bandleader who records as Floating Points, he was gigging in Greece and his MySpace page listed bookings across Europe several months deep. It's been a quick ascent for Shepherd, who, until recently, had only three official EP releases and a few songs on compilations. But it's easy to hear why tastemakers—from BBC's Gilles Peterson and Mary Anne Hobbs to Ubiquity A&R man Andrew Jervis—have been touting his work for the past year.

Shepherd's evocative music drifts in a spacey, synth-drenched world, bouncing between boogie-house, glitch-hop, and jazzy dubstep beats. His proficiency in multiple genres can be chalked up to early years spent studying classical composition and jazz piano at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester. At 18 he moved to London, where he's currently working on a Ph.D. in pharmacology.

Not unlike his academic pursuits, the music Shepherd makes is also quite a heady concoction. Songs like "K & G Beat" blend Vangelis-like ambient synths with 2-step beats, while "Love Me Like This" is a soul-saturated, '80s-inspired electro-house track. "Vacuum Boogie," released on Shepherd's and Rinse FM DJ Alexander Nut's Eglo imprint, features filtered synths and an undulating underwater groove. Shepherd's varied output has garnered attention in the dubstep, hip-hop beatmaker, and house communities, even as he's expanded to the live setting. Like fellow classical- and jazz-grounded Brit amalgams Cinematic Orchestra or Two Banks of Four, Shepherd has put together a stage ensemble.

In May 2009, Shepherd conducted the 13-piece Floating Points Ensemble at Camden's Roundhouse. The group included collaborator and singer Fatima along with brass, strings, guitar, bass, drums, and vibraphone, with Shepherd on synths and Rhodes piano. The show was a big success, but tight schedules have hindered doing more dates. "With the musicians being professionals and myself consumed with studies, it's quite hard to get 13 people in a room at the same time," he quips. "I've had some new ideas for tunes for the ensemble with some more interesting scales and altered harmonies. But I'm trying to not take on too much, both to give me a chance to write original stuff and to get some science done."

The cliché is that electronic producers are often called mad scientists, but in the case of Floating Points, maybe there's something to it. "[The Ph.D. work] is really interesting stuff and gets me out of bed in the morning. Science does help with music making, especially with sound design," he explains. "It helps to be rational when creating sounds that have been imagined. But then it's also quite fun to turn buttons randomly!"

◦ "PEOPLES POTENTIAL" IS OUT NOW ON EGLO.
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HOTDOG LOGIC

BREAKING DOWN THE VISUAL LANGUAGE OF SWEDISH DESIGNER **PMKFA**.



"The way I work and try to use different styles and mediums is based on a solid restlessness," says Michael Thorsby, best known as graphic-design force **PMKFA**, from his parents' house in the deep forests of Småland, Sweden. And considering that the country has just been blanketed by a snowstorm, the air there is nearing single-digit temperatures, and Thorsby has spent the day waiting on platforms for severely delayed trains, that restlessness is palpable.

Thorsby has lived in Tokyo for the past five years, a time he has used to "gradually break down the set of logics I believe we all are born and bred with." This tension between his own foundation, and efforts to

resolve it through another cultural lens, he believes, has resulted in some of his most interesting pieces. "It's natural. If I can use parts of my skills that can be found in schooling in Europe and combine it with a mindset from a place 9000 kilometers away, something unexpected might—or most definitely—will appear," he explains. "This fusion usually surfaces when I'm slightly under-stimulated... at least, that's when things tend to get very psychedelic."

Said under-stimulation recently yielded *PMKFA* (Sixpack France; 25 €), his new book that features pieces ranging from abstract landscape photography to visual

homages to his own musical passions, such as "screw, dancehall, and everything involving deep, synthetic bass." The book includes distorted, hallucinatory character illustrations, shots of his pattern-based garments, and fully three-dimensional art installations—all of which, despite their material diversity, manage to feel like part of a coherent and consistent body of work. Cartoony gradient bombs on two feet stand next to hotdog counterparts, geometric light shows fill closed frames, and bizarre men on horseback are juxtaposed with old-timey jukeboxes. The designs are broken up by conversations between Thorsby and several of

his friends and fellow artists, which provide elegant insight into the mind behind the designs. Oh, and purple seems to be the predominant color at work here, if you're keeping score.

Clearly Thorsby isn't short on creativity, but that doesn't mean that he's not constantly seeking ways to push himself. "When I compile my work, whether it be for books or websites, it's always too see what I haven't done—to extract what I did right but find out what I'm bad at, fill in those gaps, and work to feel more complete as a creator." *Evan Shamoon*

PMKFA and an assortment of **PMKFA**-designed shirts are available at sixpack.fr. pmkfa.com

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GLASSER

GETTING CRAFTY WITH A DREAM-POP PUMP-ORGAN PRINCESS.



The creative impulses of Cameron Mesirow, the woman behind Glasser's dream-like folk-pop visions, are irrepressible, even when she's under the weather. She intended to be in the studio on the day of our phone interview, but with her voice shot, she's instead crafting puffy pieces of jewelry, origami, and tiny sculptures around her Los Angeles home. "I've been bored out of my mind!" she exclaims with a laugh, sounding anxious to resume her work.

Lately, she's been recording with Ariel Rechtshaid, producer for Cass McCombs and bass player for Foreign Born (whose frontman, Matt Popieluch, is Mesirow's boyfriend and joins Glasser for most live shows) and "expanding Glasser horizons exponentially" in the process. Working in an actual studio is a new development, as she used GarageBand to record her earlier material. "It's a lot more exciting and kind of scary, too... Suddenly, I don't know how it's gonna turn out," Mesirow admits. GarageBand still plays a part in developing beats and basic tracks, but for her album, she says, "I'm starting out with re-recording all the vocals that I've done, and then collaging over what I've

done musically—new sounds, new beats, new interruptions."

Although unsure when Glasser itself began, Mesirow says her first show occurred in late 2007 after about a year of songwriting. Her debut EP, *Apply*, was released last year on True Panther Sounds, and it features three originals with remixes by Tanlines, Lucky Dragons, John Talabot, and Delorean. Each track pulses with an eerie, psychedelic energy, as Mesirow employs her voice's Kate Bush-like elasticity as both melody and a key rhythmic device, infusing her already mesmerizing beats with quivering life.

Bringing Glasser to life on stage has varied with the setting. Donning one of several costumes designed by LA-based designer Ida Falck Øien, Mesirow has been variously accompanied by Popieluch, Brooklyn duo Tanlines, and, at her EP release, a nine-piece band. One of the most intriguing Glasser-related performances thus far was Mesirow's ongoing Auerglass collaboration with visual artist Tauba Auerbach, which recently brought her out to New York. For several weeks, the two

performed daily at the Deitch Projects gallery on a bifurcated wooden pump organ that they conceived and designed over the last six years, musically acting out the interdependency of their friendship. "I had every other key in a four-octave scale, and [Auerbach] had every other key that I didn't have," explains Mesirow. The pumps at each artist's feet provided wind for the keys of the other. In performance, they wore Øien-designed costumes that required each other's help to wear, including wooden shoes that fit together "like jigsaw puzzles" back to back.

There's an Auerglass editions show on the way, and Glasser's "Tremel" single is soon to be released on Young Turks, featuring a remix by Jamie Smith of The xx. The *Apply* 12-inch has sold out, but available now are "songboxes" she's fashioned: little treasure-chest sculptures filled with beads, bells, scraps of fabric, and digital downloads. Such inventive repackaging reflects both Glasser's ornate aesthetic and that restlessness so inherent to her work. "I have to have a lot of visual stimuli in order to feel creative!" she explains.

GLASSER'S DEBUT LP IS OUT THIS YEAR ON TRUE PANTHER SOUNDS. MYSFACE.COM/GLASSER

HOT CHIP ONE LIFE STAND

Among SPIN's 'Upcoming Records That Matter The Most' and Stereogum's 'Most Anticipated Albums of 2010'.

'The sharpest dance rockers this side of their pals LCD Soundsystem'
-Rolling Stone



ON TOUR

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THE NORWEGIAN SYNTH-SOUL DABBLERS DISCUSS THEIR FAVORITE MUSICAL DUETS OF ALL TIME.



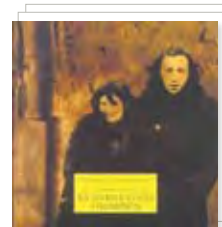
**Ashford & Simpson
"Solid"**

Stripped-to-the-bone drum machines, ice-cold chorus guitars, and digital-analog synths. As an album, the selection is pretty, uh, solid, too. The breakdown on "The Closest to Love" is very impressive, but it's always gonna be this positive title track that defines the record.



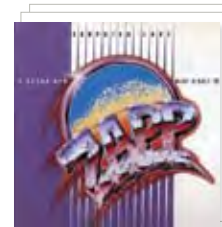
**Jermaine Jackson & Pia Zadora
"When the Rain Begins to Fall"**

Although Jermaine has done a lot since the early '70s with The Jackson Five, Pia Zadora is considered a one-hit wonder. There are lots of arpeggiated synthesizers here, and we guess they tried to make it sound like falling rain or something. A nice little pop song, and a guilty pleasure.



**Richard & Linda Thompson
"Dimming of the Day"**

This song is a beautiful, mellow folk ballad. Their voices blend together very nicely, and we don't mind at all that they decided to bundle this track with the acoustic guitar instrumental "Dargai."



**Zapp
"Computer Love"**

Many years ago, we tried to record a version of this digital soul track, but somehow we couldn't make it work; maybe it's just too perfect. Roger Troutman's computerized voice sounds especially great with the female vocal. This one—as well as Mtume's "Juicy Fruit" and Isley Brothers' "Between the Sheets"—was a reference when we started recording together six years ago.



**Marvin Gaye & Diana Ross
"You're a Special Part of Me"**

This one is taken from the *Diana & Marvin* album, probably the strongest duet album ever made. This is the blueprint; it's impossible to make it any better than this. It's got everything: the best voices, the Motown sound, and great songwriting.

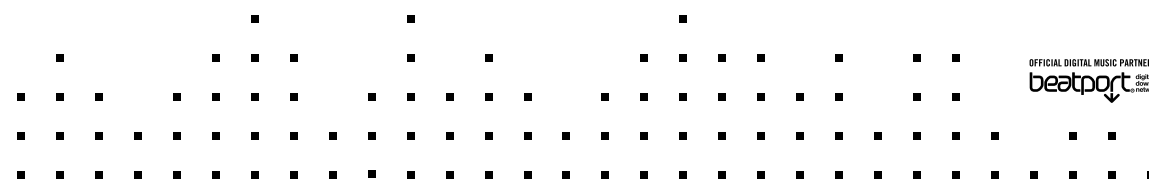
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THE FUTURE OF SOUND

BOT'OX

COSMO VITELLI RETURNS WITH SINISTER, SYNTHED-OUT
SOUNDS INSPIRED BY CAR CULTURE.



Neither Benjamin Boguet nor Julien Briffaz owns a car. But it hasn't stopped them—the duo herein known as Bot'Ox—from creating moody electronic soundscapes perfect for moonlit drives down dark stretches of highway.

Although Bot'Ox may be a new name to most ears, both Boguet and Briffaz have been dabbling in music for years. Boguet, 35, first made a name for himself in the late '90s during the days of French Touch, crafting luxuriant house and disco bangers under the moniker Cosmo Vitelli. He signed with Solid in 1998, releasing his first LP, *Vidéo*, and more otherworldly, genre-bending 12"s like "We Don't Need No Smurf Here," and eventually started his own I'm A Cliché imprint in 2003, which has since put out material by the likes of Simian Mobile Disco, Yuksek, and Tacteel. The 32-year-old Briffaz (one half of duo [T]ékél) learned to play drums at an early age, attending the prestigious Lycée Carnot for high school, where Daft Punk and Modjo were amongst his fellow students.

Briffaz met Boguet in 2004 when he took a space in the same Parisian studio complex, also occupied by producers like Para One and Jackson. "My first impression of [Boguet] was that

he was someone very talented and thoughtful, but also very stressed and kind of obsessed with his music," Briffaz confesses. Boguet, a committed crate digger and DJ, found Briffaz's own obsessive interest in sound quality intriguing. They took a name derived from a shared fascination with consumer culture, and produced two tracks for the band Showgirls in 2005. "The common thing is that we are both not great musicians. We use the studio to lie, actually," Boguet cheekily admits.

After finding success in partnership, they decided Bot'Ox would create a concept album, choosing to focus their first release on the aesthetic and lifestyle surrounding transportation—and the result is an all-encompassing, icy ode to the machine age. On "Babylon by Car," arcade-game bleeps cascade into foreboding violins under a cowbell-heavy four-to-the-floor before coalescing into funk-style guitar riffs. "Crashed Cadillac" is similarly ominous, starting with creeping drums and synths that crawl at a snail's pace, colliding somewhat discordantly with blippy horns.

The duo's laborious working process involves hours of recorded studio experiments; they then "chop and edit these long tracks in order to find

sense and make a track out of it," Briffaz explains. This can take them about three months per track, a timeframe that Boguet admits is pretty insane. "It's kind of nonsense, economically," he offers. "I'd like to say it's an integrity thing, but I'm not sure—we don't know how to do it any other way."

While the majority of their tracks are instrumental, "Blue Steel" features vocals by sultry crooner Anna Jean. Keeping their concept in mind, they hired Swiss design firm Körner Union to direct the song's attendant video, a slow-motion exploration of what happens when an SUV meets various pool noodles and flotation devices. "The idea was to create a shock between objects which creates nothing violent," Boguet says. "A paradox of the idea of an accident, but with no damage at all."

After spending so much time thinking about the connection between good tunes and automobiles, the guys have decided the two best places to listen to music are clubs and cars. "When Kraftwerk released their *Autobahn* LP," Boguet illuminates, "they played the album for journalists in their cars." After I suggest that Bot'Ox follows suit when their album is released, he replies, "I just need to buy a car first, maybe."

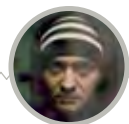
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STRANGE MAGIC

KLIMEK EXPOUNDS ON THE THEMES THAT INFLUENCED HIS LATEST ALBUM.

Polish-born, Berlin-based sound artist Sebastian Meissner is in the midst of a hyper-creative multiple-personality crisis. Only rarely has he been himself for the past decade, choosing names like aUTOkoNTRaST, Bizz Circuits, Random Inc, Random Industries, Autopoieses (with Ekkehard Ehlers) and, most notably, Klimek for his various noise and ambient experiments on Mille Plateaux, Kompakt, and Anticipate Recordings.

His newest release as Klimek, *Movies is Magic* (Anticipate), might be the one to bring all the voices and pictures in his head together. Its 10 tracks flow into one gorgeous, disturbing, villainous, and cinematic sound of blissful confusion. Highlights are many: the shimmering "Exploding Unbearable Desires," the sustained tension and release of "Abyss of Anxiety (Unfolding the Magic)," and the self-immolation and blind love of "Greed, Mutation, Betrayal" are but three, all designed to make your heart stop and head spin.

We found Meissner at home, just back from a festival in Krakow, working all night and early morning on additional tracks for the vinyl version of *Movies is Magic*.
Walter Wasacz



XLR8R: What are your first memories of associating what you saw on the movie screen with sound?

Sebastian Meissner: I think it was seeing Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Also the beauty and mysticism of Popol Vuh's compositions for Werner Herzog movies, and the combination of pop and classical music themes in *An American Werewolf in London*.

Your pieces in Kompakt's Pop Ambient series are like mini film soundtracks. Was this intentional?

Immediately after [Kompakt co-founder] Wolfgang Voigt heard my first two tracks—"Milk" and "Honey"—he told me about his own music's associations to road movies [like] *Paris, Texas* and *Dead Man*. I thought I could adapt the idea of

doing music for imaginary movies. The references to soundtracks within my work kept on multiplying, and I felt the urge to carry this topic to extremes... This album is the ultimate statement I can make about the connection of sound and cinema, and a good point to start working on something new.

Slavoj Žižek, Brian Wilson, and Van Dyke Parks are a direct influence on *Movies is Magic*. How does philosophy and pop culture combine to inspire your productions?

This connection is the very core of what this album is all about. On the one hand, it's how passionately [Slovenian philosopher] Žižek isolates the psychological aspects in movies ["music is always

potentially a threat," he says in the documentary *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*]. On the other side, Van Dyke Parks and Brian Wilson's track "Movies is Magic" points out the ambivalent aspect of cinema. The dark side of Hollywood... David Lynch's *Inland Empire*, James Ellroy—these all influence my work.

So, movies is magic, and real life is tragic?

In the album there is a picture of a cinema inside of an Italian mental asylum. What better way to emphasize the meaning of this phrase when you connect the image to the title song by Brian Wilson, somebody who spent a significant part of his life dealing with his inner demons?

Your track titles foreshadow provocative, edgy listening but the overall effect is calming, like recalling a vivid dream. Do you see your work this way?

For an instrumental sound artist, track titles are a way to communicate explicitly with your audience. They should draw attention to the fact that there is something much more inside those tracks. But the reviews of the album I read so far weren't so uniform about the "calming" aspect!

Movies is Magic is out now on Anticipate.
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WITH AY AY AY AND HIS CÔMEME LABEL, **MATÍAS AGUAYO** REEXAMINES HIS LATIN ROOTS AND TAKES

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HOUSE MUSIC TO PARIS, BUENOS AIRES, AND ALL POINTS IN BETWEEN.

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WORDS WALTER WASACZ PHOTOS BASTIEN LATTANZIO



That voice, mellifluous from the start, confident and full of grace to the end, is the perfect introduction to Matías Aguayo.

He's in London; I'm in Detroit. Over the small speaker in my cell phone, his ear for English comes across as extraordinary; but so does his German, Spanish, and French, one would imagine. Language is his primary instrument, after all, and he practices it endlessly. For 70 solid minutes, the interview I intended instead becomes a wide-ranging conversational drift through places, people, politics, culture, memories, inspirations, rhythms—and how Aguayo uses all of them to create a sound that makes a mess of most conventional definitions of electronic dance music. He's found his niche, building a unique career in the footnotes of sub-sub-sub-genres, and he sounds like he's having a blast.

"I rather enjoy staying on the cultural periphery," says Aguayo, explaining why he chooses to live between Buenos Aires and Paris. But it might as well describe his productions, live performances, and still-fermenting projects that combine his love for techno, house, electro, disco, and pop—gleaned from European and North American sources—with Latin openness and romance. "I can focus more freely on what I want, keeping away from things that might distract me, taking advantage of where life has taken me."

All of these things manifest themselves on Aguayo's new full-length for Kompakt, *Ay Ay Ay*, and on his Argentinian label/dance collective *Cómeme* (Spanish for "eat me"), which brings the music directly to the people in the form of BumBumBox street parties in South American cities. The events are also staged with an eye toward linking fans of infectious good times all over the world via YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, and other social-networking communities.

"In Europe, the scenes still depend on how the music is distributed. Discovery of new music is mostly limited to

collectors," Aguayo says. "*Cómeme* came out of a freer, more wide-open approach in South America. We discovered great music from Brazil, Colombia, South Africa, Angola, and other places that could change DJ culture for the better. Instead of the usual club sets based around Chicago, Detroit, and European models, we are finding something new and exciting out there."

SPECIAL BEAT SERVICE

Aguayo was born in Santiago, Chile in 1973, the same year that President Salvador Allende was overthrown in an infamous coup d'état and replaced by the commander-in-chief of the army, Augusto Pinochet. Two years later, Aguayo's family left an increasingly oppressive Chile for Europe. His story is similar to that of iconic minimal star Ricardo Villalobos, whose family left Chile for Germany in 1973. (The two know each other, Aguayo says, "but we are not super-close.")

Aguayo found himself in Cologne throughout the fertile 1990s, when Wolfgang Voigt—then known variously as Mike Ink, Love Inc., and Studio 1, among other aliases—Michael Mayer, Jürgen Paape, Robert Babicz, and Dr. Walker were all part of a movement reimagining and recasting the future of German techno as a polka-dotted, global party machine ready to take on the new century.

But just as important was another inspiration that came from a place closer to home: a friend of his father was a DJ who introduced young Aguayo to some killer jams via cassette mixtapes. "I was exposed to funk and disco records, and then



"I try to make what I do as intense and vital as possible each time.

Otherwise, why should I do it?"

started putting together my own tapes," he says. "The influences for me were coming from all directions."

Soon, Aguayo was getting DJ gigs at Cologne's legendary Liquid Sky parties and began working with Mayer in the group Zimt, which packaged acid house with Euro-pop and disco. 1998's "Shake it!" was Zimt's sole claim to fame, but its simple ambition to make the club experience universal and inclusive matched the direction being set for Kompakt.

"We all were club kids who had an open relationship with pop music," Aguayo says. "I liked vocals in songs, and hook lines. We had the influence of New York and Chicago house, but it was new wave and punk that we grew up listening to. We thought we had stumbled upon something new."

GET CLOSER

Aguayo's next project emphatically proves his point. Closer Musik, his partnership with Dirk Leyers, introduced a spaced-out sexuality that had been lacking in the fledgling Kompakt empire. Minimal techno in 2000 was dominated by the clicks-and-cuts dialectics of Frankfurt's Mille Plateaux imprint. It was smart but dry, intellectually engaging but emotionally bereft.

But Closer Musik's "One, Two, Three (No Gravity)" helped change the temperature. It dared to tell a story, led by Aguayo's dreamy, interstellar vocals—"Floating free/Eternally/Planet E is far away/Where I am is where I stay"—on top of layers of atmospheric, synthetic wash, jazz guitar, a rapid rhythmic pulse, and booming bass drum. Nothing at the time sounded like it. Slow, fast, warm, cool, listening-and-dancing music all going off together at the same time. It still holds up 10 years after the fact, a rarity in techno.

The follow-up single was even better. "You Don't Know Me" spun an even darker but funnier tale, mounted on wicked electroid synth and bass lines, driven forward with vivid imagery of sexual desire and dancing all night long. Aguayo sings: "I love to dream of love/I love talking to myself/I love to listen closely/I love to hear my voice/I love to touch myself/I love the poster on the wall/I love to keep a secret/I love to lick my lips/ 'cause I'm lonely/But I'm not the only one." Sleazy and self-centered, yes, but the bravura, honesty, and elegance in Aguayo's performance helped make him a dark prince of the growing pop minimal scene. The gorgeous b-side, "Maria," also made a-list DJ charts

and the full-length, *After Love*, was one of the top electronic dance LPs of 2002.

The group fell apart the following year, Aguayo and Leyers going their separate ways into solo careers (Leyers relocated to Berlin and has worked with new wave disco stars Justus Köhncke and Eric D. Clark, among other producers and vocalists).

STRICTLY RHYTHM

Of Cologne, Aguayo says that the scene worked so well in the 1990s and early '00s because "the city is small, but has its own identity, its own rhythm. The people don't follow trends, they make their own trends. I liked the personal approaches to making music."

The "inner Latin" in Aguayo also found the cultural currents of the town, founded in 50 A.D. during the reign of the Roman Emperor Claudius, to his liking. "It's an old Roman city, a Latin city, a Catholic city," he says. "I find such places and the people in them very attractive."

Which puts commuting from Buenos Aires to Paris with contacts remaining in Cologne all into a greater context? "Well, yes, I hadn't really thought of it before," Aguayo ponders. "There is something about these more open, romantic places that appeals to me. Maybe it is the Catholicism—the cultural aspects, not so much the religion itself—that does it for me."

In 2005, Aguayo released "De Papel," which cheekily channeled a group of the same name created for Mexican television in the early 1990s, on Kompakt's Pop sub-label. The track also appears on *Are You Really Lost*, his first solo LP issued the same year. The music begins a thematic departure from the twisted narratives found on the Closer Musik sides, but only slightly, with greater emphasis on simple vocal phrasing ("So in Love," "The Green and the Red"), pounding percussive elements, and effects. The title track has a trippy, sci-fi synth line and bites down harder on the low end more than any of his previous work. That same year, he remixed Mayer's "Lovefood," making the track sound more mysterious and villainous than the original.

But Aguayo's current course might be traced to a period that began with his release of a four-track EP on London's Soul Jazz imprint, known largely for remastering rare and classic archival recordings, but also for selecting contemporary artists who fit into its funky parameters. In 2007, Soul Jazz issued Aguayo's *A Night*



"The people in South America and Mexico are more loose, crazy, weird, and beautiful in their relationship to music.

The Latin spirit is more fun and unpredictable."

at the *Tilehouse* EP, which contained the original version of "De Papel" and three new tracks ("Argento," "Uno," and "Lineas") that saw him delving deep into his Latin roots.

His slap at the music that brought him early fame, 2008's "Minimal," continued the trend of mixing topical self-referencing humor, funky guitars and basslines, crazy drum patterns, and Southern hemisphere disco flavors—and it contains a killer verse that indicts the scene for having "no groove, no balls."

EAT TO THE BEAT

Aguayo credits the "funny, freaky people in the scene in Buenos Aires," and others associated with the *Cómeme* ideal, for his present inspiration to make music the way he does. "It's opened me up to new possibilities, more interesting to me than the way I was creating music before," he says. "The people in South America and Mexico are more loose, crazy, weird, and beautiful in their relationship to music. I still keep some of the discipline of the way things are done in Germany and Europe, but the Latin spirit is more fun and unpredictable."

The *Cómeme* artist with the most buzz is Mexico's Rebolledo, a Latin disco new-waver who combines old and new beats in his mixes, produces quirky cross-genre tracks, and has teamed up with Superpitcher as part of the Pachanga Boys, who contributed "Fiesta Boys" to Kompakt's *Total 10* comp last year.

(Attempts to track down Rebolledo and other *Cómeme* artists via Kompakt reps in Cologne were unsuccessful. Aguayo was sympathetic: "[Laughs] Sometimes even I have a hard time getting them on the phone! But they are great, and what we're trying to do is so refreshing, by bringing the music to an audience that may not have heard it before, literally to the street. The responses we get in places like Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Medellin, and Santiago are fantastic.")

Buzz has also been kind to Aguayo's most recent productions on *Ay Ay Ay*, clearly inspired by the organic BumBumBox scene. Recorded in South America and Europe, the LP also features a growing fascination with trance-inducing African polyrhythms, vocal experiments, and straight-up chants and howls.

"Juanita" is a hypnotic, foot-stomping, mid-tempo cow-punk jam with accordions, handclaps, and wailing vocals, the perfect soundtrack for a lost weekend in the Yucatan; "Mucho Viento" shakes and stammers, with Aguayo purring and moaning in time to the loopy, strangely syncopated beats; on the breathy,

menacing "Menta Latte," Aguayo appears to sing in multiple languages, the only words breaking free from the verbal maelstrom being "I need a drink."

"Desde Rusia" sounds most like it would fit with Aguayo's earlier work, largely because it has a song structure, but in the end its weirdness prevails over anything resembling pop convention; and "Rollerskate" skips along without a care in the world, round and round and round, a mutant acoustic-based disco track that seems to make itself up as it goes along, changing speeds, adding and subtracting voices, before simply fading out of consciousness.

Aguayo says his productions and performances have blurred over time, each having influence over the other. He is not a typical studio rat, more an innovative practitioner of the live electronic arts, unafraid to take on risks and collaborators for his journey through music. His shows are more like social experiments, a means to engage communities, make new discoveries about what keeps his motor running. His combo live/DJ sets include a microphone, drum pads, maracas, and a flute. He sings, he dances, jumping on the floor and bouncing to his own tunes. No, he's not a typical club performer either.

"More and more, for me, it's about making contact with an audience, communicating and interacting with them," says Aguayo, who needs to get off the phone and finish a video shoot in a London studio. We're almost done, except for the punchline. "At the same time, it's become more loose and improvisational, it's become more fun for me. I try to make what I do as intense and vital as possible each time. Otherwise, why should I do it? I have to enjoy it and be with people who are having fun. I'm an entertainer, but I want to be entertained at the same time."

Ay Ay Ay is out now on Kompakt.
myspace.com/musicacomeme



To read more about Matías Aguayo's *Cómeme* label, visit XLR8R.com/131extras.



LONDON BASSHEADS L-VIS 1990 AND BOK BOK SLITHER

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WORDS TOM LEA PHOTOS JOSH McNEVY

BETWEEN GENRES WHILE KEEPING IT DECEPTIVELY SIMPLE.

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At the bottom of the flyer for November's edition of Night Slugs, the London club night run by Alex "Bok Bok" Sushon and James "L-Vis 1990" Connolly, it simply states: "house/bass." Compared to the convoluted descriptions you see on most rave handbills and posters—full of buzzwords trying to tempt floating punters inside the door—it's simultaneously simple and all-encompassing, and gives the first clue to the policy of what London's best party is all about.

"It's really all about keeping it simple," Sushon explains. "'House [and] bass' is a simple way to explain exactly what's going on without getting too specific or reductive... I'm hating the new genre toss-off that's happening in the UK right now. Just because a new batch of producers are making tracks doesn't mean they need a new name. It's reductive."

Reductive and, perhaps most vitally, restrictive. The lack of restrictions that the pair places on themselves—a result of their complete lack of elitism ("I hate stigma and purism in music. My aim has always been to obliterate these perceptions, and as seamlessly as possible," says Bok Bok)—is what makes them so strong. London's a city full of trends and hype, and musically that applies more than ever before. Producers are the next big thing before they've released their debut single, and over the hill by the time the tune is on the net. Promoters book the same next big things at the same time, resulting in a capital of identikit club nights.

But trends don't matter at Night Slugs, which is why long after bandwagon jumpers stopped caring about bassline house, Bok Bok and L-Vis booked Rinse FM resident DJ ReKless, and still play tracks by TRC, Screema, and Nastee Boy. While other promoters were booking the same hyped funky DJs in slightly different combinations, these two paired scene queen Cooly G with San Francisco's Christian Martin. "Both play deep, tough, off-the-wall house music," explains Sushon. Simple.

NIGHT MOVES

Let's backtrack. Sushon, 24, a grime DJ from South London who cut his teeth as a resident at Camberwell's Redstar (a "semi-legendary" pub venue where Skull Juice, Oneman, Ben UFO, and Ramadanman also played some of their first DJ sets) got in touch with Brighton's Connolly, 25, after hearing his first single, "Change the Game," in 2008. At that point, Connolly had been running Fallout, a drum & bass and breakstep night, for several years with locals High Ranking and Mumdance, and had recently started a new night called So Loud!, for which he booked Brooklyn bass king Drop the Lime. ("This was probably the best decision I ever made," Connolly emphasizes. "The

party was bananas, but more than that, Luca [Venezia, a.k.a. Drop the Lime] really helped set me on a path to where I am today. The week after the party, I wrote 'Change the Game.' The title signified a shift in my musical style.")

Connolly had also booked Sushon and his girlfriend Manara for a party he was throwing in London, and they immediately hit it off due to their similar tastes. The pair stayed in touch until Connolly officially moved to London, and they decided to make their partnership professional, with L-Vis swiftly denouncing his complex Ableton sets. "My attitude towards music has totally changed since starting Slugs," says Connolly. "I was wanting to do something really grand back then with my DJ sets, incorporating video, etc., but Slugs really brought me back to basics. There's nothing better than the energy of playing bass music with turntables."

Early Night Slugs events took place at the Redstar (guests included D1, Kingdom, and Oneman), but they soon outgrew the venue and made their debut at Shoreditch's East Village late last year, booking Drop the Lime's entire Trouble & Bass crew for an all-night back-to-back session.

Night Slugs has grown in stature with almost every event since, thrice taking over London's larger Egg club, and taking the show to Leicester and Brighton. Most recently, Bok Bok and L-Vis embarked on a Stateside tour, sharing bills with Christian Martin, Trouble & Bass, Bersa Discos, Kingdom, and fellow UK upstart Joker.

"I was blown away by how successful it was," confesses Sushon. "Every town repped hard, people actually knew what we were about, and we can't really ask for more. There's a lot of love for the UK vibe in these cities."

"I think in the past, say, 10 years, it would be pretty much unheard of for guys like us to be able to tour the States," says Connolly. "But with the help of the internet, our music can stretch so much further afield." One such example is Diplo, who commissioned Bok Bok and Manara to record a session for the Mad Decent podcast series, and later released L-Vis' "United Groove" single on the label.

The pair's own music has advanced at a similar rate. Their collaborative remix of Crazy Cousinz' "Bongo Jam" gets played out by



"I hate stigma and purism in music. My aim has always been to obliterate these perceptions, and as seamlessly as possible." - Bok Bok

the king of UK funky, Marcus Nasty, and Glasgow label Dress 2 Sweat (now part of the Numbers label umbrella with Wireblock and Stuff) closed out its discography with a four-track EP of twisted, tribal-house mutants from the duo. Bok Bok's recent remix of Jinder's "Youth Blood" is a synth-soaked cyber-funk epic, while L-Vis' new "Zahonda" single is a taut house banger stationed somewhere between Brackles and Buraka Som Sistema.

"I'm so excited about producing music right now," Connolly proclaims. "There are so many amazing artists in our scene, everyone is just bouncing off each other. I think for the first time ever I'm looking at the producers around me for inspiration. I'm constantly looking forward."

"My ears get tired of hearing the same thing," Sushon adds. "Inspired by a Dexplicit quote, I try to bring the sweet with the sour, a kind of grime euphoria. I guess years of the dominance of greyness in post-UK garage music has left me and a lot of others hungry for color, and 2009 was really the year of feeding that hunger. It's been the year of the neon synths!"

BASIC INSTINCTS

So the next step? Night Slugs the label, obviously. "That's just a natural progression for us," explains Connolly. "Over the last 18 months, Slugs has slowly been picking up a crew of really great producers [including Mosca, Greena, Jam City, Egyptrixx, and Kingdom], building tracks in a similar context to myself and Alex. It's happened really naturally; it feels organic."

Sushon continues: "This is Night Slugs coming of age. Our aim with it is to crystallize the spectrum of music we've been repping at our club nights, and to give a home and some stability to this new sound that's emerging out of the mish-mash. We want to document what's going on around us through releases that will hopefully feel timeless." He rightfully points out that the first single, the brilliant "Square One" by Mosca, "pretty much nails down this whole crossover; a house track swallowed up by the UK soundsystem portal." There's the rub: Night Slugs is seeped in British dance culture but casts an eye abroad that allows it to break down barriers before they're even established.



[Check out Bok Bok & L-Vis 1990's UK vs. US snack challenge at XLR8R.com/131extras.](#)

[Bok Bok and L-Vis 1990's Night Slugs EP is out now on Dress 2 Sweat.](#)
[myspace.com/nightslugs](#)

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WITH A NEW HOME ON SUB POP, BALTIMORE'S **BEACH HOUSE** SCALES UP THEIR TRADEMARK SOUND.

WORDS MICHAEL BYRNE PHOTOS LÖRG GRUNEBERG



Things that immediately establish a certain mood: dead body, Labrador puppy, thunder, *Inland Empire*, the band Beach House. Even among three divergent albums, Baltimore's Victoria Legrand and Alex Scally remain masters of bringing listeners to their very specific place.

It's not through insular or radically experimental music, necessarily, but via melancholic-pop comfort food—understated yet baroque, ethereal yet immediate. Catchy, even. Call it "dream pop" if you must; this Beach House is indeed a surreal locale. Legrand sings like she's in a twilight fog—organs wash, keys twinkle as distant stars, submerged drum machines deliver the duo's unwaveringly languid rhythms.

Teen Dream, Beach House's third full-length, is due at the end of January. Their first for Sub Pop, it sets a new high-water mark—their biggest exposure, highest level of production values, and most realized, honed effort yet. "I think our old stuff is really one-dimensional," offers multi-instrumentalist Alex Scally in a late-fall interview at the duo's Baltimore warehouse practice space. "We liked it that way, but we were outgrowing it and were really not wanting to play music like that anymore. As we were writing new songs, it was like, 'This this is the right feeling.' We were able to make it this multicolor giant feeling."

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Perhaps what makes it most remarkable is that *Teen Dream* marks the third re-imagining of the Beach House sound. In 2006, the band debuted with a self-titled record on Carpark. The album was recorded over two days in Scally's basement, and it radiates a certain lo-fi-ness, but something much different than the dirty crunch that's turned a value into a genre in recent years. Rather, it's an alluring simplicity of sounds and formula, and the sense that whatever is happening in the music is happening at the bottom of a shallow reflecting pool.

The sound was unexpected, and unexpectedly efficient—music from a duo that obviously didn't need to be anything more than a duo. Legrand's voice—a Nico-like instrument that lays itself into your headspace like the trace of a cool, gentle finger, replete with its chill—needs little to complement. Slide guitar on the first record, mainly, haunting and delicate, and lyrics that make love (and would-be love) seem like the only thing there is in the world, beckoning in soft tones "hold your hand on me."

Two years later, the duo released *Devotion*, also on Carpark. With standouts like "Gila," "You Came to Me," and "Heart of Chambers," the band clarified its vision. Legrand's voice pushed out of the mix even further, and became both a heavy ballast and arching support for everything else Scally put into the songs, adding even more keys and organ, filling in open spaces with funereal wash. The songs were less about love than places—"Gila," "Home Again," "Turtle Island"—within the context of love (or vice versa), in melodies shaped not just for indie pop, but that could fly for straight-up drive-time pop (if that drive time involved a moonlit desert).

"It's really easy to do what you've done before," says Scally. "Sometimes people do it because they don't know what else to do, how to go forward." And Beach House does so at the risk of losing fans at each phase of the band's progression. The things about the earlier records that warmed people to Beach House—do-it-yourself production values and an oddball kind of minimalism and chill—may, to the band, be seen as old limits, but to listeners, they might be hallmarks of a certain beloved sound. It's the risk any artist takes moving forward but, for a band as singular as Beach House, it seems amplified.

"A lot of the writing on *Teen Dream* is expanding the same sort of equation [as *Devotion* and *Beach House*], but challenging ourselves to build a more fantastical landscape," says Legrand. "See how far you can push things, make crazier colors." A fine example, "Used to Be," saw release last year as a 7-inch, paired with 2006's "Apple Orchard." The mournful organ of the original is swapped for piano—turning the tone temperature up on the song by an important degree—and the ending, which originally deconstructed the song into the same metronomic drum pattern that it begins with, is embellished, and even hopeful.

"It wasn't that we were unhappy with the first version," explains Legrand. "It was the belief that there were things in the song that were warm and emotional and could be stronger."

"That song was a huge trial for us," Scally adds. "When we first made it, we made it in two days. It sounds like a demo, the original.



We had to make this song part of the musical world we're in now, or scratch it. We really loved the song but thought it was going to be left behind. We were hating it forever."

AN UPSCALE REMODEL

One of the larger upsides to joining up with Sub Pop was recording money. ("We didn't want to leave Carpark because we love [label manager] Todd [Hyman] and love working with such a small label," Scally says.) Not only did that mean working with producer Chris Coady (of TV on the Radio, !!!, and Yeah Yeah Yeahs fame), but it meant isolation and time to get the record exactly right. "[It meant] getting to a place that doesn't feel claustrophobic, for me personally," says Legrand.

"It helped for the album to, like, be all there

was [around us]," adds Scally.

And it was for 25 days in Woodstock, New York, leaving us another record that is radically different than its kin. *Teen Dream* is, to hear the band tell it, the realization of an aesthetic that the duo's been attempting for two albums, and falling short of. "We were able to get the sound going through minds," says Scally. Which is lush and hi-fi, less ethereal, and more "rock band": the mix is cleaner, which is a powerful change in the Beach House universe; there are live drums, washes of actual human cymbal, and Victoria Legrand's vocals are more on a pedestal than they've ever been—less gazing and more diva.

"I was always really inspired by Victoria's singing," says Scally. "She's always had the power, but this record really displays [it]. I

feel like my job in the band is to ornament her voice, find ways to surround [it]. I found it was just [with] every song she would create these melodies and everything would take off. Everything would keep building up into these giant [musical] towers.

"The [songs] always change once you start singing," he says to Legrand. "It's always a reaction to the voice that drives it. We would never be able to arrange a song until the voice, its melody, and style were there."

"[It's] a melody that just appeared," replies LeGrand. "Like, [floating] at the edge of a beach."

Teen Dream is out January 26 on Sub Pop.
myspace.com/beachhousemusic



B A P
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TAKING CUES FROM DANCE MUSIC AND INDIE ROCK'S PAST, LAST YEAR'S HYPNOGOGIC-GLO-FI-POP-WAVERS FORMED A LOOSE, INTERNET-BASED SCENE WITHOUT EVEN KNOWING ONE ANOTHER.

WORDS JOE COLLY ILLUSTRATION SCOTT BARRY FOR SACREDMTN



I'm talking inspiration with Alan Palomo, the 21-year-old Brooklyn-/Austin-based artist behind the psychedelic synth-pop outfit Neon Indian, when he offers up his earliest musical obsession. "It all started when I discovered [New Order's] "Bizarre Love Triangle," he says. "It summarized every blissful feeling of infatuation I've had since birth in those six minutes."

At once buoyant and melancholic, the influence is clear in Neon Indian's songs, which often come across like a homemade fusion of rough-around-the-edges indie pop and cool '80s synth funk.

Distinctive as that combination may sound, Palomo isn't alone in making this kind of music, as other artists such as South Carolina's Washed Out and Toro Y Moi are also toying with variations on a similar style, which curiously seemed to spring up out of nowhere last summer.

SUNSHINE STATES

It's hard to pin an exact date on when the sound emerged (the closest approximation being sometime in July of 2009, when Washed Out's cut-and-paste beach ditty "You'll See It" began to light up the blog circuit), but suddenly it seemed like there was a multitude of pastoral dance-pop tracks arising from different parts of the country. In addition to Neon Indian, Washed Out, and Toro Y Moi, there was also Denver's Pictureplane, Philadelphia's Memory Tapes, Brooklyn's Small Black, and a slew of others playing with bedroom-recorded electronic music, and writers were quick to group these artists together, giving the microgenre clumsy handles like "chillwave," "glo-fi," and "hypnagogic pop," none of which seemed to really accurately describe the sound.

That made sense in a way, because, for the most part, each of these musicians was operating independently, and, with the exception of Washed Out and Toro Y Moi, had never met one another. They were doing aesthetically similar work but were part of a scene only in the loose, online sense of the term. Still, there are similarities that can be drawn between each of these artists' tracks: Generally, the music is often sample-based and purposefully rough-hewn, but propulsive and playful, packed with childlike emotion and a coastal ambiance (hence all the talk of "beach music" you've probably encountered over the past year or so). There's a clear debt owed to lo-fi innovator Ariel Pink in terms of production, not to mention Panda Bear, whose 2007 *Person Pitch* might very well serve as the blueprint for the sound.

It's also worth noting that these guys, who are mostly in their early 20s, represent one of the first waves of artists to be raised predominantly on internet culture (hell, the key inspiration for their sound is a record not yet three years old), and their artistic development is as much a product of file-sharing and blogs as it is traditional music discovery—you know, that forgotten practice of

buying records in a store or finding out about bands from friends. Those shared files no doubt include plenty of indie rock, but with bedroom music-making taking on more and more traits of electronic music production (ie. the use of laptops, Ableton Live, etc.), some of these guys are just as influenced by dance music's history, and it's made quite an impact on the sound as a whole.

MEN WITH LAPTOPS

Palomo, a lifelong music obsessive who also records as VEGA, credits much of his sound to the music he absorbed early on. "I practically inhaled the Factory Records catalog and began getting really into stuff like Fad Gadget and Cabaret Voltaire at an early age," he says. Those darker tones are evident in his tracks, but are often balanced out with a blissful, upbeat feeling—even seemingly downcast numbers like "Deadbeat Summer" and "Should Have Taken Acid With You," from his recent *Psychic Chasms* LP, tend to bounce along cheerfully. IDM was also an influence, he says: "Boards of Canada had a lot to do with it. They exemplified a lot of the qualities I eventually became obsessed with on some of the Neon Indian stuff." Though at times sketchy, Palomo's work in particular shows a real attention to songcraft, which may stem from his admiration of a few of music's more notorious studio rats. "In terms of work ethic and craft, I got pretty into Scott Walker. Aside from that I'd say Todd Rundgren—that's another maddened, prolific musician I always end up referring back to in times of need."

Though there are pretty clear delineations between each of the artists under this burgeoning genre's umbrella, perhaps the two closest in approach are friends Ernest Greene and Chaz Bundick (known as Washed Out and Toro Y Moi, respectively) who both reside in Columbia, South Carolina. Like Palomo's, the pair's inspirations are a mélange of new and old. "My first big influences were more hip-hop based—people like DJ Shadow and Four Tet," Greene says. "I didn't really discover dance music until the past couple of years, so it's more of an indirect influence." Bundick's style, which oscillates between more traditional guitar pop and looped, blown-out dance tracks, is more production-heavy, and the things that inspired him tend to be more layered. "Sonic Youth is a huge one. My Bloody Valentine, J. Dilla, a lot of the Stones Throw stuff," he says. You can hear the ghosts of these artists clearly in the chopped-up beats and woozy shoegaze backdrop of a song



like "Sad Sams," which circulated online last summer. Bundick and Greene make no bones about their creative relationship, and have grown individually, they say, from sharing ideas. "We definitely feed off of each other," Bundick says.

If we're talking in generalizations, two other artists that you might lump in with Neon Indian, Washed Out, and Toro Y Moi are Memory Tapes (a.k.a. Dayve Hawk) and Pictureplane (a.k.a. Travis Edegy), though these two probably stand furthest from the stylistic center of the batch. Hawk is the former frontman of indie-rock group Hail Social, but his solo material—which occasionally appears under the names Memory Cassette and Weird Tapes—is decidedly more enigmatic and introverted. His cut-and-paste style, which pulls from funk and dance-pop, is usually set over ambient haze and sounds best as internal, headphone music. On last year's *Seek Magic*, ambient soundscapes split time with New Orderisms, but the album mostly feels unattached to a particular genre.

Like Hawk's, Edegy's songs are heavy on mood and feel, though his style is quite a bit darker. With a clear love of kitschy late-'80s and early-'90s radio dance-pop ("I think that was permanently burned into my brain," he says) and trashy house, Edegy runs these sounds through home-recorded fuzz and an almost industrial, dark-wave filter to arrive at a sound that's also drenched in nostalgia, but more sinister-sounding, like the nightmarish flipside to Memory Tapes' dreamscapes. Interestingly, Edegy is invested in current dance culture more so than the others. "I really pay attention to a lot of the forward-thinking electronic music coming out of Europe and the UK," he says. "I'm really big on grime, the more weirder and avant-garde corners of dubstep, and I love the funky scene and wonky." That comes through on tracks like "Goth Star" and "Trance Doll," from last year's excellent *Dark Rift* album, which marry heavy, distorted bass with Edegy's androgynous vocals and chopped-up samples of folks like Fleetwood Mac.

SYNTH CITY

With the exception of Memory Tapes, whose production style is cleaner than the rest of the group, one sonic quality that ties these artists together is a tape-hissy, unrefined tone to their songs. Which is pretty easily explained—most of these guys are in fact recording in their bedrooms. ("It is really a ghetto process; I make music sitting on my bed," Edegy explains.) But, as with most lo-fi artists, the use of fuzz is just as much an aesthetic choice as it is a product of their circumstances. "I would love to go into a studio, but I just can't afford it," says Bundick. "I've tried buying nice compressors and pre-amps and stuff to make it sound better, but I don't have any technical music education, so it just sounded like I was trying too hard—it had no weight. So I went back to doing what I knew how to do best, and that's when it had the most punch." Greene agrees: "I'm not the most technical producer, so the weird mixes and blown-out sound happen naturally. But I think the most interesting things happen by mistake, which I feel would be much harder to pull off in a traditional studio," he says.

Talking to each of these musicians, both about their technical approach and style, the artist who keeps coming up is Ariel Pink, and it's hard to ignore the idea that he is, at least in some ways, the grandfather of this sound. Since the early 2000s, Pink has been releasing records on Animal Collective's Paw Tracks imprint and others, but his buried pop was met with a collective shrug (and occasional disdain) upon its original release—yet it has only grown in influence since. (UK publication *FACT* recently listed his 2003 *The Doldrums* LP as their 19th favorite album of the last decade, for instance, and you can hear Pink's impact not only on this sound but also throughout much of the more rock-inspired shitgaze scene—Vivian Girls, Wavves, et al—that's emerged in recent years.)

However indirect, these artists are quick to cite Pink's inspiration. "Production-wise, I definitely favor the DIY feel to his records, but even more important is his pop sensibility," says Greene. "He writes catchy songs that are slightly 'off,' which falls in line with my tastes."

Palomo concurs: "I remember hearing Ariel Pink for the first time on a long van ride to a debate tournament my sophomore year of high school. It was pretty cathartic, to say the least. I spent the whole day freaking out about it and playing 'For Kate I Wait' on repeat as I hogged my friend's Discman," he says. "It's his ability to endlessly reference songs that always seem slightly out of reach. Like, they could be on the tip of your tongue the rest of your life. It's pretty difficult to capture some of the idiosyncratic magic of AM Gold hits but he seems to do it very prolifically." Listening to a Neon Indian song like "Terminally Chill," with its heavy reverb and innocent outlook, it's easy to see what Palomo picked up from Pink.

LONE STARS

If there are common threads that run through the work of, say, Neon Indian and Washed Out, there are plenty of stylistic traits that divide them, and in a lot of ways it feels shortsighted, if not outright incorrect, to consider their work as part of a collective. And though there's a mutual respect that extends to everyone involved ("I definitely think they have some pretty intense talent," Palomo says of Washed Out and Toro Y Moi), each artist sort of scratches his head as to how they've all been lumped together. "I've not interacted with any of those dudes, so it doesn't feel like a scene to me," Hawk says. "Music is so malleable that you can invent genres all day and find examples to fit the name you've come up with."

But it is fascinating in some sense that this brand of music, the apparent result of geographically scattered artists working independently, could develop so quickly. Subgenres pop up all the time, of course, but it's not often we see it happen within the span of just a couple months. One has to think the unfettered access we have to music online plays a big role there—an artist could potentially hear a contemporary's new demo the day he records it—but often the same online communities and publications that provide idea-sharing create false relationships. Palomo describes it as such: "It seems like whereas before, genres were cultivated by a community confined to a group of similarly minded friends in a city somewhere who began influencing each other's music, now you could find three or so bands in different places in the world, tie some vague comparisons, and call it a movement. It's kind of assaulting in some ways."

That's true; one can't assume that each of these musicians is sharing the same musical dialogue. But whether they like it or not, upcoming releases by these artists will inevitably be compared to one another. And there's much new material to come from each of them, it seems. Toro Y Moi releases his first full-length, *Causers of This*, in February, and Palomo plans to record the debut VEGA LP shortly, which will surely mark a different direction for those accustomed to his more laid-back Neon Indian material. Both Pictureplane and Memory Tapes are also working on follow-ups to their 2009 releases, which, though in their early stages, also sound decidedly different to their predecessors. Given a little more time, maybe these artists won't sound so similar after all.

myspace.com/neonindian,
myspace.com/pictureplane,
myspace.com/thebabeinthewoods,
myspace.com/memorytapes,
myspace.com/toroymoi

S A
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Late last year, New York photographer and filmmaker **Olivia Wyatt** traveled to **Ethiopia** to document the music of 13 different tribes for an upcoming film planned for distribution by Sublime Frequencies. Along with tons of videotape, Wyatt also took along a Polaroid camera. What follows are some of the many experiences she captured on instant film.





Body paint is common among tribes in the south **Omo Valley** region of Ethiopia, and more common among men. Some men place white paint on their legs and draw wavy lines, others mimic the patterns of animals on their body. The paint is made with white chalk, yellow mineral rock, iron ore, charcoal, and saliva.



There were at least 100 camels in this field (top right) and all of them are owned by two **Afar** men. At night, the men sleep with their AK-47s on the ground just beyond the fence to protect their camels.





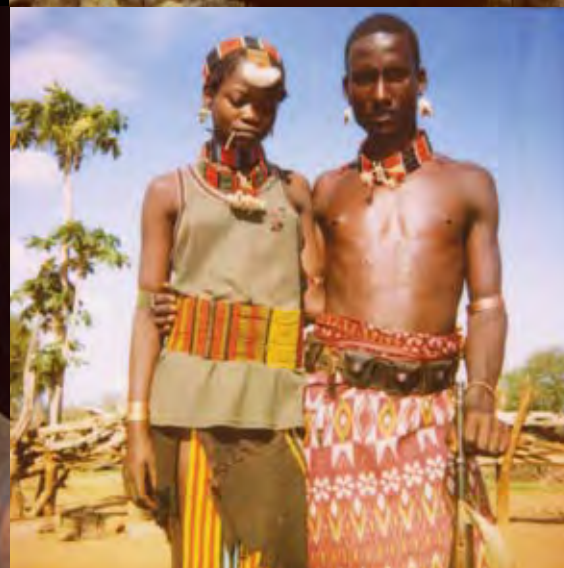
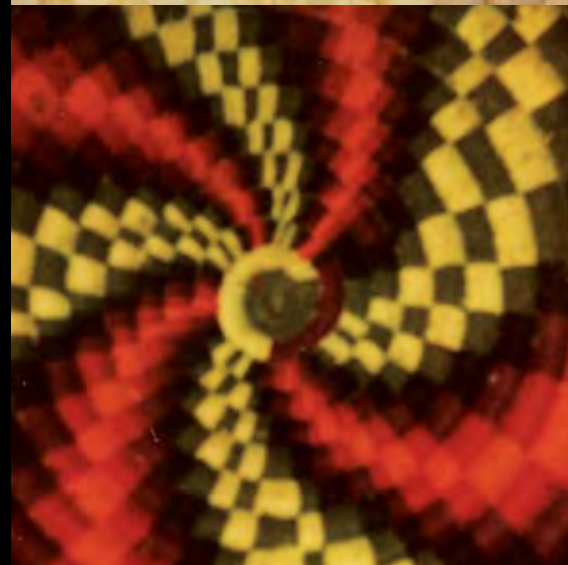
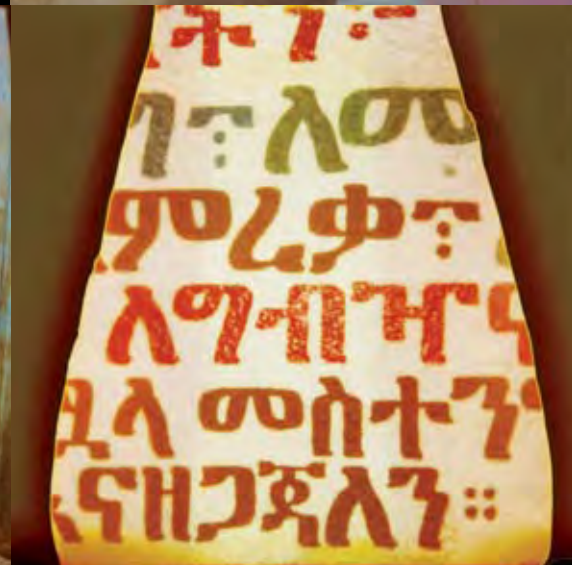
• Young **Hamer** girls' bracelets serve as both baubles and musical instruments. Scars are extremely important in their culture; they denote strength and sacrifice. During a Hamer bull-jumping ceremony, where a man who is about to marry runs naked across a row of bulls, that same day unmarried female relatives of the jumper are whipped with sticks until their backs bleed, and the young women dance and sing in between.

One night I took a mini-bus 12 hours north of Addis to witness a Zar spirit possession on a hyena-invested mountain. We left at 3 a.m. from Addis Ababa. On my bus there was a Muslim woman (middle row), a catholic priest, a six-year-old boy, and other adults. I fell asleep, but awoke at 4:30 am to police men with guns at my window. Directly behind them, a mini-bus was completely turned over and the police were angry that we were traveling illegally at night, so they took us all to a tiny jail in the mountains and we were told we had to stay there until sunrise. Everyone was staring at me; they would look in my

direction and whisper and laugh, or some just stared, even the police. I decided to just go and talk to the police. I asked them questions about their life and told them what New York might be like at 4 a.m. and the next thing I know, they let us go. The entire bus was chanting "*forenji, forenji, forenji!*" [foreigner].



Hairstyles in Ethiopia are incredibly beautiful and unique. You can sometimes determine a tribe just based on hairstyle alone. Each time I visited a new tribe, women wanted to do my hair the way they style theirs. There were always 16 hands twisting it, braiding it, or putting coppery soil and butter on it. The men in the Hamar tribe shave portions of their head, and then use clay and paint to harden other parts, while leaving balls of hair untouched in the front and back.





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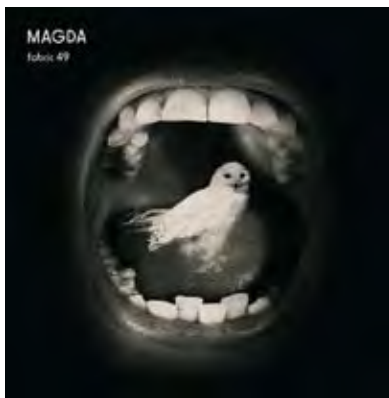
MALACHAI







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Magda
fabric 49
Out Now

Magda's latest tour de force, fabric 49, a thumping trip into the otherworldly that breeds a rare feel of mystique and discovery, without ever compromising the groove. Crafted with meticulous detail and loving precision, it carries the weight of any Magda DJ set: intricate 4/4 licks that are bass-laden to devastating effect. Dramatic sounds and eccentric basslines carry the fast-moving, multilayered mix through the rising swells of Circlesquare, the haunting vocals of Luciano, the chilling chords and offbeat pop elements of her kindred spirits at Minus (Gaiser, Marc Houle and Heartthrob), and the funk-filled soundscapes of Magda's own productions.



Buraka Som Sistema
FABRICLIVE 49
Available: 01.26.10

Born in the frenzied kuduro (the Angolan/Portuguese hybrid club music that borrows from traditional African rhythms, Caribbean rhythms and European club music) parties of Lisbon's suburbs, Buraka Som Sistema return to their roots on FABRICLIVE 49. Two years of incessant touring of their manic live show have left them hungry to return to the bedrock of their sound - the Buraka Sound System. On their debut mix CD that they incorporate their own music - complete with re-edits from the likes of scene leaders L-Vis 1990, Stenchman and A1 Bassline.



Martyn
fabric 50
Available: 02.23.10

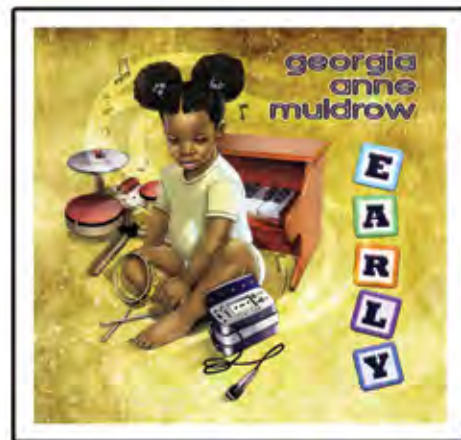
As an artist whose music has always defied classification, it comes as no surprise that Martyn's fabric mix tiptoes, straddles and stomps over the notion of genre; fabric 50 is a thrilling, unpredictable portrait of today's all-embracing and cross-pollinating music scenes. Powered only by the common link of bass culture, Martyn fuses the deep impact of 2562 and Kode 9, the funky step of Roska and Uncle Bakongo, wildly imaginative creations from Hudson Mohawke and Joy Orbison, and the cerebral trip of Werk Discs' Actress. Also glittered with his own 3024 label creations, this is a definitive snapshot of any pulsating, incandescent dancefloor taken over by the Martyn sound.



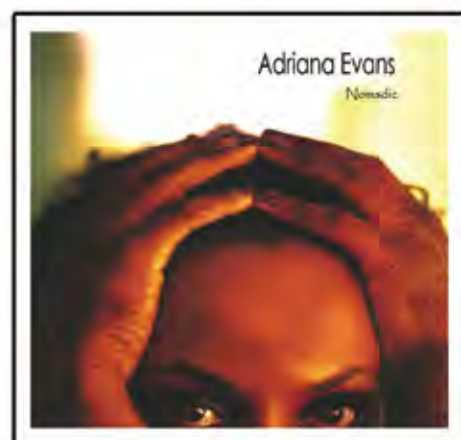
Various Artists
Elevator Music Vol. 1
Available: 03.09.10

'Elevator Music' is a collation of all the variant strains of dubstep; a completely original and exclusive collection of future bumps that reflects the embrace nature of fabric's dance floor music policy. Pooling tracks from established producers like Martyn, Starkey, Untold and Caspa & Rusko with a smattering of producers destined for great things come 2010, Elevator Music ticks boxes in categories and niches that don't even fully exist yet; unifying the vision of 16 producers with one simple passion. Bass.

How deep is your soul?



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ALBUM REVIEWS

01/10



FOUR TET

There Is Love in You

Domino/US/CD

TORO Y MOI

Causers of This

Carpark/US/CD



TWO PRODUCERS TAKE VERY
DIFFERENT PATHS TO AURAL BLISS.

Leftfield, folktronica, indietronica, downtempo, chill-out, glo-fi... the genre names keep coming, keep getting stupider, and continue to be totally inadequate in their description of electronic music that's not made primarily for the dancefloor. Kieran Hebden (a.k.a. Four Tet) has now reached album number five, and over the past decade has seen his music wedged into one poorly named category after another, while Chaz Bundick's hazy debut as Toro Y Moi has found him plunked alongside Washed Out, Memory Tapes, and other like-minded producers in the loosely formed "chillwave" scene. Yet although Hebden and Bundick have different homelands, different backgrounds, different skill sets, and different talent levels, their music undeniably treads in similar sonic space—the interesting part is how they both managed to get there.

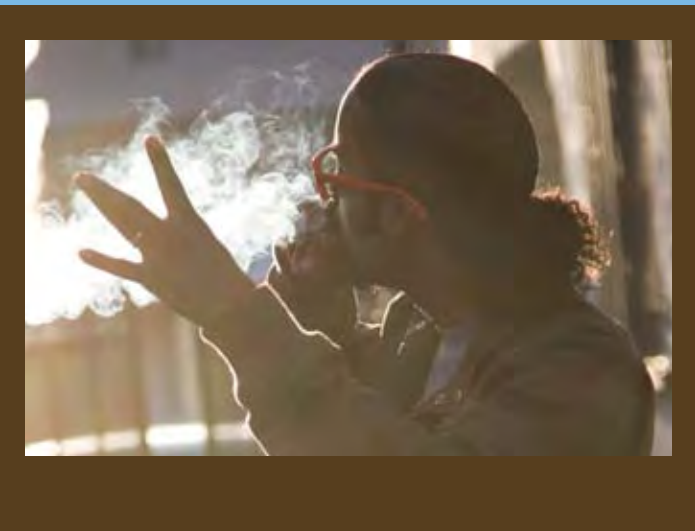
There Is Love in You is the first Four Tet full-length since 2005's *Everything Ecstatic*, and it continues that record's retreat from the folk-tinged sounds of his early career. Nevertheless, where *Everything Ecstatic* was often wonky and playful, *There Is Love* is a decidedly somber affair. Not that it's depressing; on the contrary, it's a pristine, even soothing listen. More than anything, the veteran UK producer sounds tastefully restrained, as though he's found a way to strip his music down to its essentials. While the songs are still complex and full of countless moving parts, each melody and note plays a specific role, leaving *There Is Love* with a real clarity of vision. For instance, album opener "Angel Echoes" conveys nothing so much as serenity, even as Hebden slices, layers, and interweaves a sonorous female vocal that could have been lifted from a *Pure Moods* compilation. The swirling analog synths of "Circling"—a track that could easily double as the soundtrack to a vintage high-school chemistry film—are similarly mollifying. Even the minimal techno beat, digital squall,

and chopped-up R&B vocals of album centerpiece "Love Cry" do little to liven up the proceedings—*There Is Love* remains one wonderfully chilly record. While "Sing" and "Plastic People" are slightly punchier numbers, the former's 8-bit bleeps and the latter's bell-like synths simmer rather than boil. "This Unfolds" recalls Boards of Canada with its aqueous tones and woody chimes, and the gently strummed guitar melody of the surprisingly organic "She Just Likes to Fight" wraps things up on a perfectly peaceful note.

Bundick's *Causers of This* is also peaceful, but the album's tranquil tones sound a lot more like happy accidents than well-executed plans. The debut full-length from the youthful South Carolinian pulls from a varied sound palette, bringing to mind Panda Bear (on "Blessa") and the kind of white '80s funk-pop that Hall and Oates made famous ("Imprint After," "Causers of This"). Oddly enough, Bundick's intricate compositions and reliance on organic elements sometimes recalls Four Tet's early work, although Bundick's output is notably funkier and his songs are bathed in an airy haze that really solidifies the Toro Y Moi sound. Add in the off-key singing on "You Hid" and the inelegant aural clutter of "Fax Shadow" and it seems that he's also lacking Hebden's immaculate attention to detail. Nevertheless, it's clear that Bundick is a talented producer; however, given that *Causers of This* contains both the dreamy psychedelia of "Minors" and the *Discovery*-era Daft Punk bounce of "Lissoms," he's also an unfocused one at this stage of his young career. But give him four albums and 10 years to work out the kinks, and he just might make something impeccable that punters can lump into whatever made-up genre name is being bandied about at the time.

Shawn Reynaldo

Forthcoming: dBridge & Instra:mental Present Autonomic, Optimo



DAM-FUNK

Toeazhizown

Stones Throw/US/2CD-5LP

Boogie revivalist and long-haired LA electro visionary Damon Riddick wants to make music that lets your hair blow in the wind—a difficult task, but his massive *Toeazhizown* offers just that kind of soothing experience. Full of retro-futurist '80s funk filled with smeared keyboard melodies and dirty beats, it's perfect for banging out of a souped-up hovercraft and is easy to soak up and get lost inside. Buoyant backgrounds and vapor-trail synths mirror the mantras and platitudes that double as lyrics. Prince-style falsetto and airy chords run throughout, create an inviting, optimistic atmosphere, especially compared to more inward strains of spacey pop. Dam may be doubling down on a genre many discarded, but he's got the style and sincerity to make it work. *Patrick Sisson*

BLOCKHEAD

THE MUSIC SCENE

Ninja Tune/UK/CD

On his years off from making beats for Aesop Rock and others, Blockhead has assembled a group of instrumental LPs that stands solidly on its own, despite the generally shoddy reputation of instrumental hip-hop full-lengths over the past decade. *The Music Scene* adds new knots to Blockhead's sly, ironic take on boom-bap, incorporating shifting structures that spiral into changing tempos, half-remembered snippets of soul horns and gnarly old guitars, and occasional drifts into hazy, shimmering psychedelia. Sadly, this fog thickly enshrouds the back half of the disc as the tempos stagnate, rendering it inert and crying out for a shot of adrenaline: paging Dr. Aesop Rock? *Rob Geary*

BOMB THE BASS

BACK TO LIGHT

!K7/GER/CD

Plenty of people have mentioned the supposed tropical influence on Tim Simenon's new album. Granted, he worked with Brazilian Gui Boratto (and a host of other guests) on this follow-up to 2008's *Future Chaos*, and the resulting album is light and breezy. But Simenon has had a wide-ranging career over the past couple decades (he produced Neneh Cherry's "Buffalo Stance" and Seal's "Crazy"), and what ties this album together isn't any sense of Brazil, but rather a more cinematic feel, best exemplified on the spacey "X Ray Eyes" and the spare "Happy to Be Cold." But the hands-down standout is closer "Milakia," featuring Martin Gore on synths. *Luciana Lopez*

CASSY

SIMPLY DEVOTION

Cocoon/GER/CD

Perhaps best known for working the decks at Berlin's Panoramabar, Cassy Britton is a DJ and producer whose penchant for sultry, lush sounds has long set her apart from her minimal ilk. Yet on her second official mix CD, her technique seems a bit off, if only because the first half of the mix features some questionable choices in contrast. For instance, placing the dark, minimal soul of Ian Loveday and Baby Ford's remix of the latter's "Make Your Own Sunshine" next to the bright disco-house throwback of Trus'me's "Good God" doesn't quite flow. Luckily, the mix eventually takes a different approach, marrying foreboding deep techno sounds with more vocally oriented, slamming dancefloor gold. *Thomas Rees*

CLIPD BEAKS

TO REALIZE

Lovepump United/US/CD

Calling an album "mature" is often a death knell for creativity and excitement, but in the case of *To Realize*, it's good thing. Clipd Beaks have never been tied to traditional songwriting—their 2006 *Preyers* EP and 2007 full-length, *Hoarse Lords*, were both cacophonous collections of spastic yelps and unruly bursts of noise—but *To Realize* is downright epic. Crafting spacious soundscapes, taking drone vision quests into '70s psychedelia, and offering

pleasantly subdued vocals, the Oakland trio appears to have found solid footing as a band of new-school doom-rock warriors. Liars' last few records are an easy reference point, yet Clipd Beaks prefer hazy dirge to nightmarish sonic assaults—the world may be coming to an end, but these guys aren't here to bum you out. *August Howard*

PATRICK COWLEY AND JORGE SOCARRAS

CATHOLIC

Macro/US/CD

A few years ago, some San Francisco DJs and music enthusiasts happened onto a stack of unreleased tape reels featuring collaborations between gay disco icon Patrick Cowley and multi-instrumentalist Jorge Socarras. Shockingly, *Catholic* was not a Hi-NRG disco album along the lines of Cowley's production for Sylvester, but a multi-genre concept work that hardly contains any typical disco elements. Instead, there's the frenetic post-disco punk of "I Never Want to Fall in Love," the dreamy synth softness of "I Remember," and the almost Television-like weirdo-rock of "Cars Collide." A synth-drenched cover of Donovan's "Hurdy Gurdy Man" finishes the 14-song disc, and the listener is left with a feeling that there is no better song to complete such a lovely, significant time capsule. *Thomas Rees*

DINOWALRUS

%

Kanine/US/CD

In comparison to the noisy rock sounds propagated by contemporaries such as HEALTH, Ganglians, and Liars, Dinowalrus is a far more unhinged outfit whose heavily reverberated atmospheres, herky-jerky basslines, and warped soundscapes bring to mind earlier days of post-punk. On "BEAD," the third track from this Brooklyn trio's debut, %, the spastic fervor of James Chance & The Contortions is invoked, while other songs like "I Hate Numbers" and "CMYK" seem to be directly inspired by *Chairs Missing*-era Wire and, simultaneously, the psychedelic sprawl of Can's discography. The obvious influences lend more to remembering old favorites than to finding new ones, yet Dinowalrus' album should appeal to fans of no-wave's vintage aesthetic. *Patric Fallon*

● ELEVATOR MUSIC: VOL. 1

Fabric/UK/CD

2-step, grime, dubstep, bassline, funky... the family tree of UK garage never stops sprouting new branches. The latest mutation to sprout up—an intriguing combination of classic house, atmospheric dubstep, and percussion-led funky—doesn't even have a proper name, so Fabric has assembled this cheekily titled compilation. Pairing Untold's blown-out bass with Hot City's old-school rave flavor and Martyn's emotive restraint may seem unusual, but together they make sense—it's as though an entire crop of producers has stumbled into dubstep and UK urban music by accident; unrestrained by purist notions, they've infused the music with new energy and new sounds from across the electronic spectrum. Contributions from young guns Mosca, Shortstuff, and Hackman are especially strong, but the compilation is ace from start to finish. *Shawn Reynaldo*



ERNEST GONZALES

BEEN MEANING TO TELL YOU

FoF/US/LP

Been Meaning to Tell You is an album whose actual music is only half the story. Released by the innovative LA label Friends of Friends, the latest record from Ernest Gonzales is accompanied by a book of art pieces for each track, a viral website, and a covers version of the album, as well as the preceding EP with extra non-album tracks. The album itself balances electronic twee with inventive arrangements, and although it occasionally suffers from the lack of a vocalist, the record is carried by Gonzales' clean melodies and ear for sonic detail. The project as a whole is impressive, but it's a testament to Gonzales that his music holds up to the grand scope of his endeavor. *Tyler McCauley*

THOMAS HAMMAN & GERD JANSON

LIVE AT ROBERT JOHNSON VOL. 4

Live at Robert Johnson/GER/CD

Frankfurt clubbing institution Robert Johnson keeps it close to home on the fourth installment of their ongoing mix series. Having manned the decks for nearly a decade at the club's Liquid night, Thomas Hamman and Gerd Janson are no newcomers to the world of house, and on *Live at Robert Johnson Vol. 4*, the duo weaves a striking, confident testament to the genre. Mirroring the exemplary track record of Janson's Running Back label, the selections here are impeccable. Flirtations with electro (DJ Du Jour) and Kompakt techno-pop (Superpitcher's remix of Dntel) aside, the real meat here is classic house for house lovers—deep, funky, jacking, and always nodding to disco. A fantastic mix, and a satisfying homage to an honored club. *Ross Holland*

KAP BAMBINO

BLACKLIST

Because/FRA/CD

Although Kap Bambino's reputation as a shit-hot live act is well established, *Blacklist*, the Bordeaux duo's third album, doesn't quite capture the group's on-stage magic. In the club, Orion Bouvier's beefy, fuzzed-out electro provides the perfect soundtrack to Caroline Martial's wild yelps and stage-diving antics, a dynamic successfully captured on some of this album's noisier numbers ("Red Sign," "Acid Eyes," "Blacklist") when the band cranks the mayhem to 11

LIGHTNING BOLT

Earthy Delights

Load/US/CD

Rhode Island duo Lightning Bolt is one of the rare groups you don't want to change. Their m.o. is so potent, it would be misguided for them to deviate from it. Drummer/vocalist Brian Chippendale and bassist Brian Gibson make hyper-tense noise rock that moves with exhausting speed and power while avoiding cartoonish macho posturing. A somewhat-maddening OCD quality animates Lightning Bolt's no-wave speed-metal jams, but they somehow make that vein-bulging repetition more exciting than it has a right to be through sheer mercurial dexterity on their instruments. *Earthy Delights* offers yet more artful vandalism of musical decorum and acutely rendered aural apocalypses. As ever, one needs to gird one's nervous system for the band's whirlwind tour of textural extremities, rhythmic complexities, and skin-rippling velocities (save for the relatively sludgy "Colossus"). *Earthy Delights* for some, and otherworldly torments for others. *Dave Segal*



and sounds something like Missing Persons gone digital hardcore. But *Blacklist* suffers from heavy-handed (over)production and too often wades into more overt pop territory ("Dead Lazars," "Rezozero"), effectively neutering the band's punky spark and resulting in run-of-the-mill, nth-generation new wave. *August Howard*

KING MIDAS SOUND

WAITING FOR YOU

Hyperdub/UK/CD

As The Bug, dub master Kevin Martin invites flame and fury into his studio, employing dancehall MCs to invoke poison darts, murder, pain, and insanity, as displayed by his brilliant 2008 LP, *London Zoo*. He dials down the temperature with King Midas Sound, a dream-dub project featuring poet Roger Robinson and vocalist Kiki Hitomi, with no loss of killer effect. The two share the microphone on the hazy, hypnotic "Goodbye Girl," the ethereal stomp "Outta Space," and the dread-filled environmental polemic "Earth a Kill Ya." Martin weaves subtle production touches throughout, increasing and reducing sonic pressure, adding snares ("One Ting") and crispy crackles and pops ("13 Miles and Miles") atop thickening layers of tasty, melodic bass vibrations. *Walter Wasacz*

● LINDSTRØM & CHRISTABELLE

REAL LIFE IS NO COOL

Smalltown Supersound/NOR/CD

After hearing *Where You Go I Go Too*, a three-song, 55-minute opus, one might not expect Lindstrøm to follow it up with a pop-disco collaboration like *Real Life Is No Cool*. As it turns out, the Norwegian super-

producer has been intermittently working with Christabelle since 2001 and all the years of back-and-forth were clearly worth it, as *Real Life* is simply stellar. While traces of Lindstrøm's usual space disco dot the landscape, the album incorporates an '80s disco-funk vibe that perfectly suits Christabelle's loose and sultry vocal stylings. From the vocoders and horns of "Baby Can't Stop" to the woozy synths and boy-girl vocal foreplay of "Let It Happen" to the sexy strut of "Lovesick," *Real Life* is a carefree delight. *Shawn Reynaldo*

MASSIVE ATTACK

HELIGOLAND

EMI/US/CD

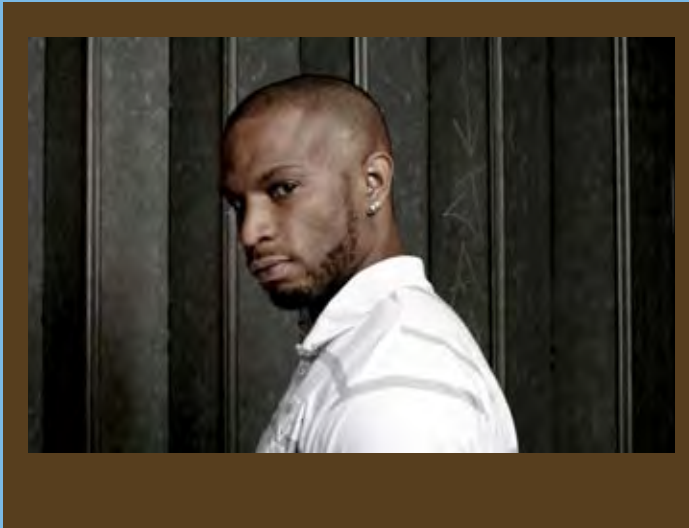
Seven years in the making, *Heligoland* doesn't quite carry the comeback expectations their Bristolian trip-hop compatriots from Portishead faced when releasing *Third*, but that's probably a good thing, as *Heligoland* isn't in the same league. Although it's better than their 2003 disappointment, *100th Window*, and also sees the return of founding member Daddy G, the album is more of a continuation than a reinvention. Sultry vocal turns from Martina Topley-Bird, TV on the Radio's Tunde Adimpe, and especially Hope Sandoval (on standout "Paradise Circus") offer some of *Heligoland*'s finest moments, but while the album's dusty beats, pointed electronics, and cinematic feel are pleasantly familiar, at best they recall the band's past glory rather than pushing their legacy forward. *Shawn Reynaldo*

MIKKEL MEYER

BACON

Statler & Waldorf/GER/CD

Don't confuse Danish electronic experimentalist Mikkel Meyer with German techno producer Michael Mayer. Whereas Kompakt's Mayer makes taut and cohesive digital music, Meyer takes a scattershod approach to avant-bass. On *Bacon*, spacious dubstep numbers like "Kotelet" seem on the verge of collapse, crackling with static, brittle rimshots, and unstable sub-bass notes. MCs Non from Shadowhuntaz and Tanzanians Lufu and Chidi Benz add random vocals to a few tunes, but instrumental works such as "Ostetaerte" are far more mysterious and potent. The highlight is also the finale: "Jordbærkage" veers smoothly into 2562's dub-tech territory. If you fancy a varied approach to electronics with an artful twist, then grab a slab of *Bacon*. *Tomas Palermno*

**JOHN MORALES****THE M&M MIXES**

BBE/UK/2CD

A Bronx-based mixing pioneer, John Morales certainly worked with some disco luminaries, and it is these tracks on best-of collection *The M&M Mixes* that still hit with force. Selections from Curtis Hairston, First Choice, and Universal Robot Band still get people out on the floor at gay disco nights, mostly because of Morales' use of prominent funk bass and ass-shaking congas. But some other numbers fall flat because their camp value has passed (Bumblebee Unlimited's "Lady Bug") or because they're simply boring, overstretched midtempo tracks (Sky's "Because of You"). Sampling Morales' better work is a must for any disco connoisseur, but it might be more fun to find the original vinyl versions of the more outstanding pieces featured here. *Thomas Rees*

GEORGIA ANNE MULDROW**KING'S BALLAD**

Ubiquity/US/CD

Within three years, singer/songwriter/producer Georgia Anne Muldrow has cemented herself as somewhat of an anomaly. As a self-contained artist with album projects on an array of indie labels, it's apparent that Muldrow is intent on being at the helm of her D.I.Y. destiny. *King's Ballad*, a reference to the recently departed king of pop, is a breathtaking part of that continuum. While adhering to her interstellar brand of sociopolitical funk, the album showcases a slightly different side of Muldrow, as jaunts in poppy punk ("Room Punk"), minimal wave ("Thatch"), and tango ("Morena Del Ray") exemplify her breadth of musical knowledge and dexterity. *King's Ballad* marks the natural progression of a remarkable artist-in-residency. *Rico "Superbizzze" Washington*

OWEN PALLETT**HEARTLAND**

Domino/US/CD

Filled to the brim with ambitious, orchestral arrangements and an army of instruments, it's easy to forget that *Heartland* is the work of one musician. Owen Pallett, the man formerly known as Final Fantasy, builds his live violin-and-vocal set-up into a serious wall of sound on his third full-length. Dense and detailed yet never overstuffed, *Heartland* thrives on nearly every track with a theatrical sense of melody and a keen ear for layering elements into stunning blasts of sound; even on the sleek pop of "Lewis Takes Action," Pallett inserts surprising melodic twists and ornamentation into his compositions. Impressive in both scale and execution, *Heartland* succeeds not just due to Pallett's sizable talents, but his belief in his even larger ambition. *Tyler McCauley*

MARCUS NASTY

Rinse: 10

Rinse/UK/CD

By now, any electronic music aficionado with a pulse has heard of UK funky. Punctuated by shuffling garage beats, tropical-flavored percussion, and R&B flair, the music is the latest in a long line of post-garage urban sounds emanating from the British Isles. One of the scene's figureheads is Marcus Nasty, founding member of legendary grime collective N.A.S.T.Y. Crew, who took notice of this new crop of producers—most of them coming from grime—making this new mutant house strain and quickly began promoting the sound on Rinse FM. Now he's unveiling *Rinse: 10*, an overstuffed compilation of funky house snippets, many of them exclusive and unreleased. While Nasty's mixing isn't always on point, *Rinse: 10* is a fun, bubbly mix that's more than adequate as a funky primer and contains choice selections from fellow scene heavyweights like Roska, Geeneus, Lil Silva, Crazy Cousinz, Fuzzy Logic, and Ill Blu. *Shawn Reynaldo*

● **PANTHA DU PRINCE****BLACK NOISE**

Rough Trade/UK/CD

The third full-length from Hendrick Weber maintains the high quality of previous efforts while pushing certain elements of his shoegaze-y, minimal-inspired techno sound further. Noah Lennox (a.k.a. Panda Bear) contributes some lovely multi-tracked vocals to "Stick to My Side," giving even more emotional resonance to Weber's always-emotional sonic palette. And in a nod to classical minimalists like Philip Glass, the prepared bells and other organic percussive elements heard on the album repeat in hypnotic swirls, yet change slightly every so often. With the glassy, Superpitcher-like phrases of "Satellite Sniper" and the ambient warmth that rides over the kicks on "Welt Am Draht," *Black Noise* just might be the height of Weber's work under the Pantha Du Prince moniker. *Thomas Rees*

● **PEVERELIST****JARVIK MINDSTATE**

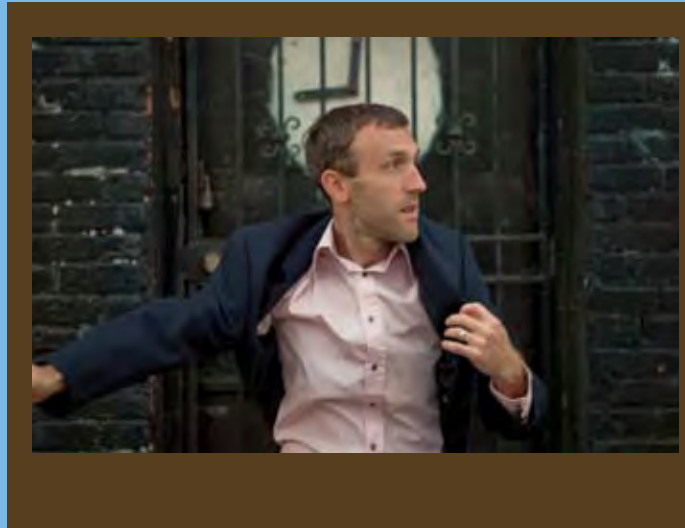
Punch Drunk/UK/CD

As owner of Bristol's Rooted Records shop and founder of the Punch Drunk label, Tom Ford doesn't have trouble staying current. But the dubstep producer's full-length debut as Peverelist, named after the inventor of the artificial heart valve, incorporates futurist techno vibes into his dub vibrations and low-end rhythms. Boasting seven new tracks, along with previous singles "Infinity Is Now" and "Clunk Click Every Trip," *Jarvik Mindstate* showcases his tight style, crisp rhythms, and junglist roots. "Yesterday I Saw the Future" rolls a bit on gentle synth currents, pitched forward by staccato beats and satisfying bass thumps, while "Valves" runs slight but solid, with swatches of sound bouncing on shifting beats. These are tracks that move forward but keep the past firmly in focus. *Patrick Sisson*

● **RADIAN****CHIMERIC**

Thrill Jockey/US/CD

Radian are no strangers to deconstruction. Through past albums like 2002's *rec. extern* and 2004's *Juxtaposition*, the Austrian trio has taken apart every aspect of their band—rhythm, melody, and songwriting—and rebuilt themselves into a glitchy, experimental post-rock outfit that defies categorization. Five years later, Radian has set out to dismantle the rock band on their latest release, *Chimeric*, an album



RJD2

The Colossus

RJ's Electrical Connections/US/CD

If you never got "Ghostwriter" out of your head, you've probably been waiting for RJD2 to return to his beatsmithing roots. But instead of straight hip-hop, *The Colossus* is an omnibus record, swallowing brass-wielding collaborators, live instruments, hand-aged beats, and its creator's voice—all in service of a mission to unify RJ's pet genres via horn-blasted statements of intent fit for rollicking arenas ("Let There Be Horns"), menacing synthesizer pit traps ("A Spaceship For Now"), and intricate instrumentals. Besides the closing faux-Beatles "Walk With Me," RJD2 drops the emo that tainted *The Third Hand* and swings for the fences when he takes the mic himself, rocking like a British Invader on "Gypsy Caravan." Even when he's channeling his inner Lionel Ritchie, it's not so easy: the smooth façade of "The Glow" hides lyrics clowning the yacht-rock yuppie he briefly threatened to become. Welcome back, Ramble John. *Rob Geary*

built on the foundation of distorted textures, piercing feedback, and cut-and-paste drum patterns made from recordings rearranged and reimagined to fit their syncopated rhythms. Ten-minute epic "Feedbackmikro/City Lights" is a standout journey through pattering percussive noises, inverted guitar textures, and atmospheric elements that eventually coalesce into a fully realized composition. Simply put, *Chimeric* ups the ante for inventive instrumental music. *Patric Fallon*

● **RIVA STARR****IF LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS, MAKE LEMONADE**

Made to Play/GER/CD

Italian-born Riva Starr (a.k.a. Stefano Miele) is difficult to pin down. His talent for catchy hooks is as well known as his predilection for pilfering sounds from various genres, and both tendencies are on full display here. Whether it's Eastern European strings, horns, and accordions ("I Was Drunk," "Bulgarian Chicks," "Black Cat, White Cat"), sax-laden Miami bass ("Black Mama"), old-school acid squelch ("China Gum," "Dance Me"), or percussion-heavy Latin beats ("Maria," "Caballeros"), Starr can use it to fashion a bouncy, dancefloor-ready tune. Taking cues from like-minded producers (and unabashed supporters) Jesse Rose and Claude VonStroke, *If Life Gives You Lemons, Make Lemonade* finds Starr making a clear statement that house music doesn't have to be a drab, paint-by-numbers affair. *Shawn Reynaldo*

● **SCUBA****SUB:STANCE**

Ostgut Ton/GER/CD

Hotflush founder and dubstep-techno crossover artist Scuba (a.k.a. Paul Rose) has been in rock-steady ascent since dropping the 2008 monster jam "Hard Boiled," a track that helped build a bridge of sound from London to Berlin. This DJ mix shows off where he's coming from, where he's going, and who's coming with him. At its best, *Sub:stance* shows off the talents of young British producers Joker, Pangaea, Ramadanman, Sigma, and breakout star Joy Orbison, whose cheeky "Hyph Mngo" and "The Shrew Would Have Cushioned the Blow" are set up beautifully here. Other highlights include Mount Kimbie's wonky "Maybes (James Blake Remix)" and Scuba's own minimal dub-club cruiser "Last Stand." *Walter Wasacz*

● **SOULS OF MISCHIEF****MONTEZUMA'S REVENGE**

Hiero Imperium/US/CD

Despite not having dropped a group album in almost a decade, Souls of Mischief still have enough gusto to keep hip-hop heads listening. No, SOM's latest effort, *Montezuma's Revenge*, is not as consistently surprising as their classic debut, *93 'Til Infinity*, but just because they don't outdo themselves doesn't mean members Opio, Phesto, Tajai, and A-Plus don't sound noticeably reinvigorated here. With guidance from veteran producer Prince Paul, this mid-tempo opus reminds us what a well thought-out group album should sound like—goofy skits and all. The durable drums, claps, and melodic loops from Paul provide the foundation for these MCs to reflect on hip-hop life ("Tour Stories") and juggle multiple topics ("You Got It") without showing signs of age. *Max Herman*

● **SUPERSILENT**

9

Rune Grammfon/NOR/CD

Though the packaging—turquoise, this time—eschews personnel details per usual, it's widely known that the ninth album from Supersilent was completed without their drummer Jarle Vespestad. This absence has stirred the remaining trio of Helge Sten (a.k.a. Deathprod), Arve Henriksen, and Stale Storlokken to discard their expected instruments (including trumpet and electronics) in favor of Hammond organs. Across a quartet of tracks, the improvisers dredge a series of ominous, otherworldly sounds from the innards of the instrument that probably weren't envisaged by its inventor, Laurens Hammond: The rumbles, burps, blasts, farts, and growls of 9 are portentous, hard-going, and strangely fascinating. *David Hemingway*

● **XIU XIU****DEAR GOD, I HATE MYSELF**

Kill Rock Stars/US/CD

For those reading the title of Xiu Xiu's latest record and wondering, "They're kidding, right?" the answer is: *probably*. Because despite packing the group's last six albums with some of the most serious heart-on-sleeve lyrics ever penned in indie rock, frontman Jamie Stewart actually has quite a sense of humor—and it seems like it's finally beginning to surface. At the very least, *Dear God, I Hate Myself* marks a new level of maturity and self-awareness for the band. When, on the majestically arranged, Scott Walker-esque opener,

"Gray Death," Stewart half-croons "*You expect me to be outrageous/I will be extra-outrageous*," one can't help but feel like he's now on the outside looking in—as if he's conducting a self-reflexive Xiu Xiu-on-Xiu Xiu post-modern experiment. *Ken Taylor*

● **YEASAYER****ODD BLOOD**

Secretly Canadian/US/CD

Yeasayer's 2007 debut, *All Hour Cymbals*, was the closest thing indie rock had come to world music since the Talking Heads released *Fear of Music* 20 years ago—a jittery blend of religious folk, West African polyrhythms, and synthesized experimentation. With *Odd Blood*, the Brooklyn trio has left behind its most obvious ethnic influences—and its environmental anxiety—for a tighter, more polished sound. Gone, too, is much of their debut's organic instrumentation. With Anand Wilder's breathy tenor, "O.N.E." is a few handclaps away from Wham! (which, amazingly, isn't a bad thing), while "Madder Red" could be a Bollywood tune from beyond the Milky Way. There's still a party going, but it isn't a campfire Yeasayer's dancing around this time—it's a disco ball. *John S.W. MacDonald*

● **ZELIENOPE****GIVE IT UP**

Type/UK/CD

Somewhat confusingly described in their press materials as a "jazz trio," Zeliénople may share Bohren & der Club of Gore's fixation on Angelo Badalamenti's *Twin Peaks* music, but they cut that dreaminess with wandering clouds of guitar-nourished despair. It gives the proceedings a smudged and inconsolable soiled-American vibe similar to Steven R. Smith's music, with a few formal nods to ambient electronic. *Give It Up's* drift is fuzzy without being particularly warm; while Bohren could pass as perverse dinner-party music, Zeliénople has created something much more solitary. The album's slight menace challenges the equivalence between ambient music and thoughtful domestic life; this seems to have less to do with tea than extinction. *Brandon Bussolini*



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BUBBLIN'



GREENA

London, UK



Part of the new crop of London DJs mucking about in a post-garage brew of house, grime, 2-step, funky, dubstep, and more, Greena (a.k.a. Daniel Canetti) has made a splash with only a few remixes to his name. Granted, those remixes were on the Night Slugs and Sound Pellegrino labels, and will soon be followed by an original 12" on Apple Pips. Collaborations with Bok Bok and Brackles are also in the works. Although he now calls the British capital home, the 23-year-old producer previously spent time in Venezuela, Italy, Spain, and Russia, which might explain his penchant for scanning everything from vintage Latin percussion to classic NY house for sonic inspiration.

myspace.com/ukgreena

PHOTO STEVE BRAIDEN

GUEST REVIEWS: ONE BE LO



A product of Pontiac, Michigan, One Be Lo (a.k.a. Nahshid Sulaiman) grew up amongst the despair and urban decay of a region devastated by the rapidly disappearing auto industry. Rapping and producing since his high-school days under the name One Man Army, he first made waves as one half of Binary Star before breaking out as a solo artist, founding the Subterraneous label/collective and changing his name to One Be Lo in the mid-'00s. Sulaiman converted to Islam as a young man, which inspired trips to the Middle East and his eventual move to Egypt in 2007; he now splits time between metro Detroit and Cairo. Currently putting the finishing touches on his new album, *Baby*, which should see the light of day this spring, One Be Lo took the time to let us know about a few joints he's been feeling. myspace.com/onebelo

RO SPIT
THE OH \$H!T PROJECT

self-released/US/digital

From metro Detroit comes another artist who is blowing up. He began as DJ Phrikshun on the 1s and 2s, dabbles with production, and has been recently reincarnated as Ro Spit. Lines like "Always been a leader/And I click with cool kids" prove that Ro Spit's not all swag—he can actually rap. Just listen to his Detroit version of Jay-Z's "Empire State of Mind" for further proof.

FASHAWN
BOY MEETS WORLD

One/US/LP

I stumbled across Fashawn in LA, while performing on the same bill. Shortly after, I copped *Boy Meets World*, which stayed in rotation for about a week straight. Exile delivers on the production side, and Fashawn lets us know right from the intro that he ain't riding coattails. Too many quotables, just listen for yourself.

FREEWAY AND JAKE ONE
"KNOW WHAT I MEAN"

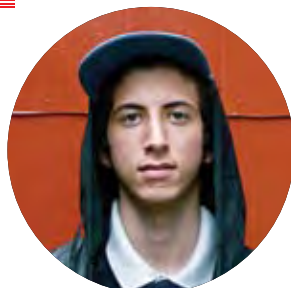
Rhymesayers/US/12

Jake One got bangers for days, but Freeway got just as many bars, and these two mesh as well as Guru and Premier. "Know What I Mean" is no exception; a song about dos and don'ts in the streets. You could look at it as Freeway droppin' knowledge for the young cats on the block, street poetry at its best, or both.

JAY ELECTRONICA
"EXHIBIT A (TRANSFORMATIONS)"

Decon/US/12

A few years ago I went to check out this new studio in Detroit. The producers there played samples of a guy named Jay Electronica. A few years later, it was no surprise when I heard everybody talking about "Exhibit A," produced by Just Blaze. Lines like "They built my city on top of a grave/Niggas die, niggas get high/And watch the parade" are lyricism in its purest form.



SHLOHMO

San Francisco, CA

Born and raised in Los Angeles, 20-year-old upstart producer Shlohmo (a.k.a. Henry Laufer) now resides in San Francisco, where he pulls double duty as a printmaking student and a wonky, leftfield beat specialist in the vein of Flying Lotus. Although he first discovered electronic music via the DJ Shadow and Amon Tobin tunes that populated the skate videos of his early teens, he quickly began producing his own beats and in 2008 founded the Wedidit collective with a crew of like-minded homies. *Shlohmotion Deluxe*, his debut album, comes out this month on the Friends of Friends label.

myspace.com/shlomoshun



JUBILEE

Brooklyn, NY

South Florida native Jessica Gentile grew up loving Latin beats and Miami bass, raving at electro and drum & bass parties, and worshipping local heroes like DJ Laz. After college she moved to NY with dreams of a career in TV or radio, but somehow ended up working as a makeup artist and DJing parties. These days she puts on the monthly Flashing Lights party—which goes down in a Chinatown dim sum restaurant—with Nick Catchdubs and DJ Ayres, and also runs the online Nightshifters label with Jason Forrest (a.k.a. DJ Donna Summer), which recently released her *Paypur* EP that she co-produced with fellow NYC artist Udachi.

jubileelovesyou.com



DEADBOY

London, UK

A few years back it seemed like 2-step was basically dead and buried, another casualty of UK dance music's relentless hype machine. But then artists like Deadboy (a.k.a. Allen Wooton) began popping up out of their bedrooms with tracks like "U Cheated," which brilliantly layers chopped R&B vocals and 8-bit keys over skittering garage beats and punchy soca snares. The *U Cheated* EP was released on Well Rounded, a label that Wooton helps operate, and is soon to be followed by the rave-tinged "If U Want Me" single on Numbers.

myspace.com/deadboysoundboy



BLONDES

Brooklyn, NY

Sam Haar and Zach Steinman have been playing together in various bands since their time together at Oberlin College in Ohio, but Blondes first took shape in late 2008 when the pair was briefly living in Berlin. Although they wanted to make synthy, danceable music, Haar and Steinman also sought to keep the music as organic as possible, eschewing computers in favor of live instrumentation and using their hands. With a spacey aesthetic and a loose, analog techno sound, their forthcoming EP on Merok will certainly be a hot commodity when it drops in the months ahead.

myspace.com/blondeblondeblondes

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IN THE STUDIO: LUCIANO

WITH A NEWLY MINTED STUDIO IN SWITZERLAND, LUCIEN NICOLET EXPANDS ON HIS GLOBAL SOUND.

Since the beginning of the decade, Lucien Nicolet (a.k.a. Luciano) has risen in the ranks to become one of the premier DJs and producers in the world, releasing countless records and highly regarded remixes, many of which found release on his acclaimed label, Cadenza. Along with a dizzying club schedule, it's hard to fathom how Nicolet manages to find time to create music, but with his latest full-length, *Tribute to the Sun*, the Chilean-Swiss producer has brought the world to his listeners' ears. Ranging from icy European techno and ambient warbling to sweaty African workouts and street-inspired South American jams, Nicolet's third album is an eclectic, global compilation of sounds that truly does represent the much-traveled DJ's globetrotting ways. *XLR8R* caught up with Luciano by phone at his new Swiss home near the French border.

XLR8R: WE'VE HEARD THAT YOU'VE JUST REBUILT YOUR STUDIO.

Luciano: Yes. The thing is that I just moved houses again, and so I decided to move the studio into the new space. It's really good, but I still have to get used to it. Like, just now I was trying to compose, but I have my son always coming in and saying, "Can I play, can I play?" And so just to install a little bit, and get back into that rhythm of work and feeling... it takes a little while. But I'm very happy with it!

SO IS THERE ANY NEW EQUIPMENT?

Well, I have a lot of new equipment, but it's more a mixture of old and new. It's sort of like a bridge between two worlds that took me a long time to build and to realize, like, I just finished work on a huge patch bay that will allow me to work between those two worlds—the digital and the analog.

THE NEW ALBUM USES A LOT MORE LIVE INSTRUMENTATION. WHAT WERE THE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES INVOLVED IN WORKING MORE WITH LIVE SOUNDS?

It was more something that I did in three or four years, traveling a lot and playing a lot in different places. While I was traveling, I was making a lot of music, depending on where I was, so the album is more of a compilation to me of what I've been doing in the past few years. But behind all this, I wanted to make something to represent different places I've been to, and sounds that I really wanted the music to reflect.

THAT DEFINITELY SHOWS. IT HAS A GLOBAL SOUND.

Exactly. It was meant to be sort of eclectic, from electronic to more traditional sounds, with some ambient interludes here and there to provide transitions between tracks.

SO WHAT WOULD YOU CONSIDER THE MOST ESSENTIAL PIECES OF GEAR IN THE STUDIO?

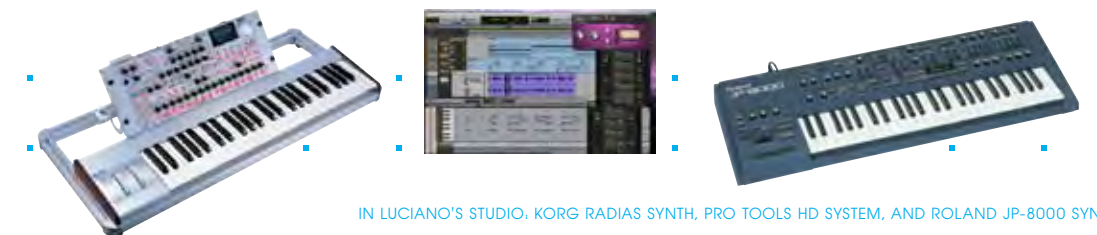
My speakers. They're very special and handmade [by Martin Audiosystems]. They're the most important thing, since the sound that you get from them is going to define what the listener hears. Then I have an old Studer mixer that I got from a radio station. That mixer is really my little magic piece, and then I have other little mixers to fine-tune certain sounds. Of course, compressors and sound modules are all over the place, too. What's interesting for me, though, is to merge both worlds. Like, take out what you can do from the digital—for example, if you work a lot on plug-ins and whatnot, it's great to start digitally and then drop them through analog systems and bring them up as an analog mix. I also have lots of older synths and modules that allow me to bring a different sort of sonic dynamic that you can't get with digital equipment. But I think that the most important thing, really, is the room. The room is what defines and gives shape to the music and its levels.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS FOR YOUR WORK?

For four or five years I've had this idea of doing an album without any kick drums, based more on sonic atmospheres and stuff like that. It's still danceable, like, I just played one of the tracks at Fabric and it really worked out, but it has no kick drums. It has very strong atmospheres and melodies, and so that's what I'm really trying to push for at the moment. The polyrhythmic elements are there, and give the music so much of its tension, but the melody gives any track its direction, really. That's what I love about melody, in that you can be doing something that seems pretty monotone, then drop a little melody and it opens up whole new worlds, a whole new emotional thing, and that's really the best part of music.

Tribute to the Sun is out now. cadenzarecords.com

See all of the gear in Luciano's studio at XLR8R.com/131extras.



IN LUCIANO'S STUDIO, KORG RADIAS SYNTH, PRO TOOLS HD SYSTEM, AND ROLAND JP-8000 SYNTH.

ARTIST TIPS: OWEN PALLETT

At first listen, Owen Pallett (better known to most as Final Fantasy) may seem to have more in common with artists like Sufjan Stevens or Beirut than the classic videogame series from which his former alias was taken. However, closer inspection reveals that he's an artist as in-step with complex technology as he is with the kind of poignant chamber-pop showcased on *Heartland*, his just-released album on Domino. Here, the Toronto-based singer, violinist, and composer explains how he fleshes out his songs' lush arrangements in the live setting while keeping it a solo affair. *Patric Fallon*

owenpalletteternal.com



1. I run my violin through two pre-amps: a Rane acoustic and a SansAmp PSA. The violin signal is converted digitally with an Apogee Ensemble converter, then run digitally through an Eventide Eclipse harmonizer. Most of my effecting is reverb-, pitch-shift-, and distortion-based (the "stimulant" effects, not the "hallucinogenic" ones).

2. To loop the violin, I use a program called SooperLooper, designed by Jesse Chappell. It runs two stereo loops (one for violin and one for keys) and a mono loop for the bass signal. To control SooperLooper, I wrote an application in Max that interprets single MIDI

commands and translates them into numerical scales that will smoothly place my violin within the stereo spread wherever I choose.

3. From SooperLooper, I send out five outputs (stereo keys, stereo violin, bass), which are DI'd to the board. Additionally, I send out a summed stereo mix which runs into two Headstrong Lil King reverb amps (via Radial re-amp boxes) on the left and right side of the stage, as well as a separate line for my bass notes. If the resources exist, I can also run four outputs around the audience for "surround sound," extending the stereo field around the crowd.

4. I use a Rocktron MIDI foot controller in performance. Six MIDI triggers control SooperLooper's basic looping functions: Record, Overdub, Play, Stop, Undo, Redo. Then I have many, many banks of other triggers that control the SansAmp, the Eventide, and my Max application. One button will turn on the distortion and swing the violin around to the left. Another will place it in the middle and trigger an infinite reverb. Other buttons will change variables on the Eventide patch, so I can switch quickly between simulated "kick" and "snare."

5. With the full stereo spread at my disposal, and an infinite number of EQ adjustments via my SansAmp, this looping rig is oriented toward creating dense, polyphonic, percussive masses. The songs I've written on it reflect that, as I've tried to pack them impossibly full of moving parts. Not necessarily the most "time-effective" method of composition, but it has its moments.

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BAYONETTA

(SEGA; XBOX 360, PS3)



You know those dreams you have where there is so much great, crazy shit going on that you never want to wake up? Hot chicks? House music? Karate? Yeah, that's what it's like playing *Bayonetta*. As the titular—and anatomically impossible—witch, you wake up from a 500-year nap to find what appear to be demonic angels (yeah, that's right) looking to put you back to bed for good. Luckily, you not only have the dark arts at your sultry command, allowing you such powers as conjuring an iron maiden into which you can kick your opposition, but also deadly stripper moves, cannons in your stilettos, and an outfit made of her very own hair that can both become a Bunyan-sized high-heel and a demon with which to devour your foes. Based on what you just read, you may be surprised to learn that *Bayonetta* received a rare perfect score in Japan's largest gaming magazine. But then again, you can buy used thongs in vending machines there, too, so I wouldn't blame you for doubting it. But believe you us, this witchy woman is as wildly fun as she is ludicrous. *Ryan Rayhill*

SHANGHAI NIGHTS

While in Shanghai on a mission, a pair of death-mask-wearing private military contractors find themselves at ground zero of a devastating catastrophe set in motion by a competing organization in the *Cloverfield*-esque (sans sea monster) action title, *Army of Two: 40th Day* (EA; Xbox 360, PS3). While the Paris of the East burns to a symphony of destruction composed by Hollywood maestro Tyler Bates (*300*, *Watchmen*), you and a partner must re-direct attacks, feign surrender, and make morally challenging decisions in order to make it out of this intense third-person shooter alive. *RR*



UPRIGHT CITIZEN

Puremagnetik Upright Bass Plug-In

MSRP: \$12, \$5.75 (with subscription);
puremagnetik.com

The upright acoustic bass is a rich, textured instrument famous for its use in classic jazz recordings. It can be plucked, bowed, or strummed, and the fat strings allow for interesting fingerings and nuanced expressions. But that big sucker is notoriously difficult to record and mic. Previously, Spectrasonics, Steinberg, and others have offered multi-sampled upright-bass software instruments, with some decent—but pricey—results. If you can settle for fewer bells and whistles, the Puremagnetik Upright Micropack is a great collection for use with Ableton Live or Native Instruments Kontakt. For us wannabe Minguses, the Brauner and Neumann multi-mic'd Bass Pluck patch is superb for jazz with subtle aftertouch response; Sockabilly is good for rock leads and the Slowbow patch is versatile enough for neo-classical composition. Overall the variety is slim but the quality very high, and that's all most citizens need.

Tomas Palermo

NOVATION LAUNCHPAD ABLETON LIVE CONTROLLER

MSRP: \$199; NOVATIONMUSIC.COM

Just months after AKAI released the first-ever "official" Ableton Live hardware controller, the APC40, Novation responds with the Launchpad. The device, fortunately, does offer something different than the APC: By providing a lighter, smaller, and cheaper controller—but maintaining a smooth workflow and solid build quality—the Launchpad is an incredibly portable way for the Live performer to manipulate his or her sets.

Like the APC40, set-up is effortlessly quick: Flip through a few preferences once and watch everything just work. And interaction is all rather slick: the device eschews knobs and sliders in favor of a grid of square, bouncy (though not pressure-sensitive) buttons. The buttons are set up to trigger clips (alternating between three colors to identify a clip's status), while round keys around the periphery help you navigate through your session, line up effects, adjust volume sliders, and otherwise transform into the hyper-evolved musical android of your dreams.

The layered functionality is very smartly designed, and makes the learning curve for the device only a bit steeper than that of the APC.

If this all sounds (and looks) a bit familiar to monome users, it should. The same minimalist approach to controller layout still applies, and fortunately, so does the ability to effectively override and reprogram all of the keys' functionality. While it lacks the handmade appeal of the monome, the fact that the Launchpad plays so nicely with Live and interfaces with other software will make you want to give someone at Novation a chest bump.

The unit itself is a durable piece of hard plastic, and extremely bag- and stage-friendly thanks to its small real estate and ability to power off of USB (unlike the APC, which requires a separate AC adaptor). It's also the cheapest of these Ableton "grid" controllers, which effectively lowers the price of entry for Ableton users hoping to spend a bit more time looking away from the screen. *Evan Shamoon*



GUN SHOW



Unveiling a new online architecture that allows for up to 256 players at a time (remember when four players was tricky?), *MAG* (Sony; PS3) is a massively multi-player online shooter that takes place in 2025, a time when private military companies will apparently be the world's main source of muscle. Like *World of Warcraft* with guns, *MAG* allows you to fully customize and upgrade your character as you play. Everything from his face and voice to his uniform and armor are changeable as you climb the ranks of your company across vast battlefields with an array of land and air vehicles at your disposal. *RR*

FLIPPIN' THE BIRD

Native Instruments' The Finger Plug-in

MSRP: \$79; native-instruments.com

Native Instruments' latest plug-in is the result of the company's collaboration with Warp Records' Tim Exile. Essentially a way to interface with your music via MIDI controller, the concept is to let the player actually "play" his or her electronics: With 40 effects algorithms (real-time samplers, transformers, filters, delays, distortion, etc.), the software maps various effects to the keys of your MIDI synth or drum pad. You trigger them in real time, with each key representing a different effect and setting, to take things a step further, you can also combine algorithms into customized effects chains. Subtlety is possible, but The Finger tends to aid particularly well in the production of beats that sound like Wall-E having his way with C3PO. *ES*



DARKSIDERS

(THQ; XBOX 360, PS3)



Taking a cue from the Book of Revelations, *Darksiders* is the tale of what happens if Sarah Palin became president and thrust us all into a world of moose jerky and church potlucks! Psyche. *Darksiders* is actually a much less bleak proposition. With a grandiose story written by legendary comic scribe Joe Madureira (X-Men, The Ultimates), and playing much like *God of War* with a dash of *Zelda*, you take on the role of just plain old War (of Four Horseman fame), seeking to discover just how Armageddon came and went without your knowledge—and why you have to take the rap for it. With the Earth caught between the armies of Heaven and Hell and the other three Horsemen missing in action, War must scour the planet battling and befriending Old Testament abominations like Samael, Abbadon, and Tiamat atop his flaming, undead steed, Ruin, as he desperately tries to prove to the Big Guy that it was not he who prematurely pulled the ultimate trigger. (We hear he can be pretty touchy.) As epically engaging and stone-cold sacrilicious a title as you are likely to get your mitts on this winter, *Darksiders* is pure bad-ass in bottle. *Ryan Rayhill*

TAKE CONTROL



Vestax VCM-600 USB MIDI Controller MSRP: \$899.99; vestax.com

MSRP: \$199; shure.com

Audio hardware companies do all they can, but even with today's software, no one can do it all. So it can be refreshing to find a limited-in-the-best-way kit like this dedicated Ableton Live DJ MIDI controller. Fancy yourself a producer/performer synchronizing external instrumentation? Best not apply here. This USB-bus-powered, 19-inch tabletop unit offers digital controls on six channels (featuring two track banks for 12 total mixer strips) plus one master section; there's no power-sucking, latency-rich built-in audio card, pre-amps, internal EQ, etc. (though weak-battery laptops benefit from the optional wall-wart). What the metal console does have is famously liquid faders with curve control, high-resolution pots, and LED-lit kills/cues. It's physically hefty, aimed at resonance-tweaking DJs, not screen-tanned trigger monkeys. The buttons are mapped to instantly complement Live's standard GUI, but those who go beyond basic scene navigating and nudging will benefit greatly by reworking send/return assignments to route clips through Live's EFX. *Tony Ware*

PERMANENT RESIDENT



A re-telling of two classics, *Resident Evil 2* and *Resident Evil Code: Veronica*, **Resident Evil: Darkside Chronicles** (Capcom; Wii) puts a spin on the traditional RE gameplay by turning them into rail-shooters (think *House of the Dead* or *Operation: Wolf*, if you're really old-school) that unravels the two tales along with a third flashback story with less of the ambient spookiness and more of the quick bang-bang à la the Wiimote. Fret not, purists, as many beloved characters, good and bad, make appearances throughout while adding a little canon to the action-packed mix. *RR*

ALIEN NATION



The ultimate sci-fi space adventure series returns this month with **Mass Effect 2** (EA; Xbox 360). While info you have saved from the first game—if you have any—carries over (as will the moody, Brian Eno-inspired soundtrack), a new threat must be faced as Commander Shepard attempts to uncover an intergalactic plot involving missing colonies of humans and an evil race of technologically advanced bug-men—all while trying to tap as much alien ass as possible. Okay, so that last part is optional, but we certainly intend to go where no man has gone before! *RR*

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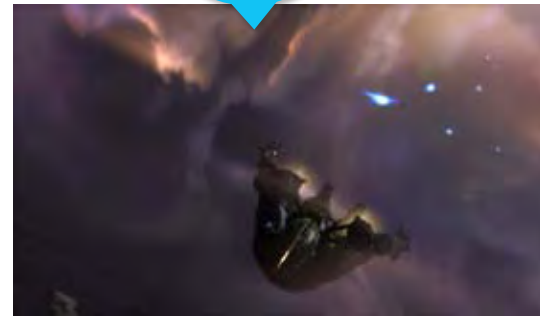
A
TRUE GEM

Focusrite Saffire Pro 24 DSP

MSRP: \$399.99; focusrite.com

For signal that's clean but not lean, Focusrite has packed two deservedly renowned mic preamps in this transparent 24/96 D/A and A/D unit, which offers combi jack/XLR jacks (with 48v phantom power), along with two line inputs (all visually monitored by LED). There are six analog outputs on the rear, as well as S/PDIF, optical, and MIDI. All this establishes along standard FireWire 400. What's not standard are dual headphone busses sporting Virtual Headphone Monitoring. Up to 100 simulated control-room configurations can be applied, and damn if it doesn't seem to put some nearfield in your headspace. Through Shure SRH840 headphones, the stereo soundstage became noticeably less recessed, less laterally ear-to-ear. Admittedly, the options are geared toward project-studio monitoring (i.e. limited to small circumference, two-way speakers), and nothing injects a true sub's visceral bass. But for those with space/volume concerns, this compact investment offers excellent tracking (with real-time comfort effects for vocalists), surround sound-capable routing, and mix imaging improvement. *Tony Ware*

INTO
THE VOID



After being sucked into a parallel universe (Fringe, re-*re*present!) via that troublesome Bermuda Triangle, **Dark Void's** (Capcom; Xbox 360, PS3) heroic cargo pilot finds himself embroiled in an inter-dimensional war against a race of jetpack-fancying alien overlords. With the old "fight fire with fire" adage stuck in your brain, you must use their own jetpacks and other converted technology against them with the help of... Nikola Tesla... who is apparently alive... and in another dimension... retrofitting alien jetpacks. An outrageous tale that even Brad Pitt wants a piece of, apparently, as his production company has just bought the film rights. Fun! *RR*

CALL 911

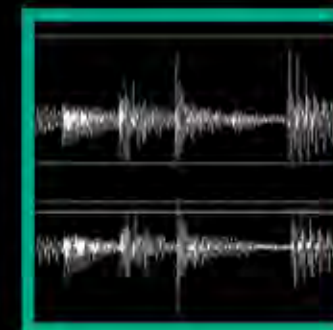
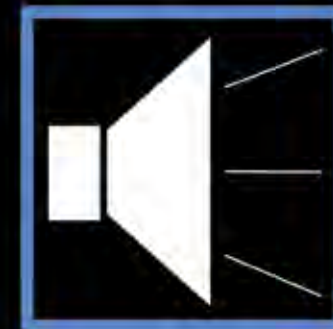


If you've got a lead foot and some of grandma's Christmas money to burn, then look no further than the **Fanatec Porsche 911 Turbo S Wheel** (Fanatec; Xbox 360, PS3). Limited to only 3000 units, this wireless racing controller is realistically modeled after its namesake, complete with force feedback, six-gear stick shift, three pedals, and a leather-stitched steering wheel. Compatible with most recent racing titles, Turbo S is sure to make anyone briefly feel the way we're sure guys like *Girls Gone Wild* impresario Joe Francis and the Prime Minister of Italy must feel all the time! *RR*

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VIS-ED Siggi Eggertsson

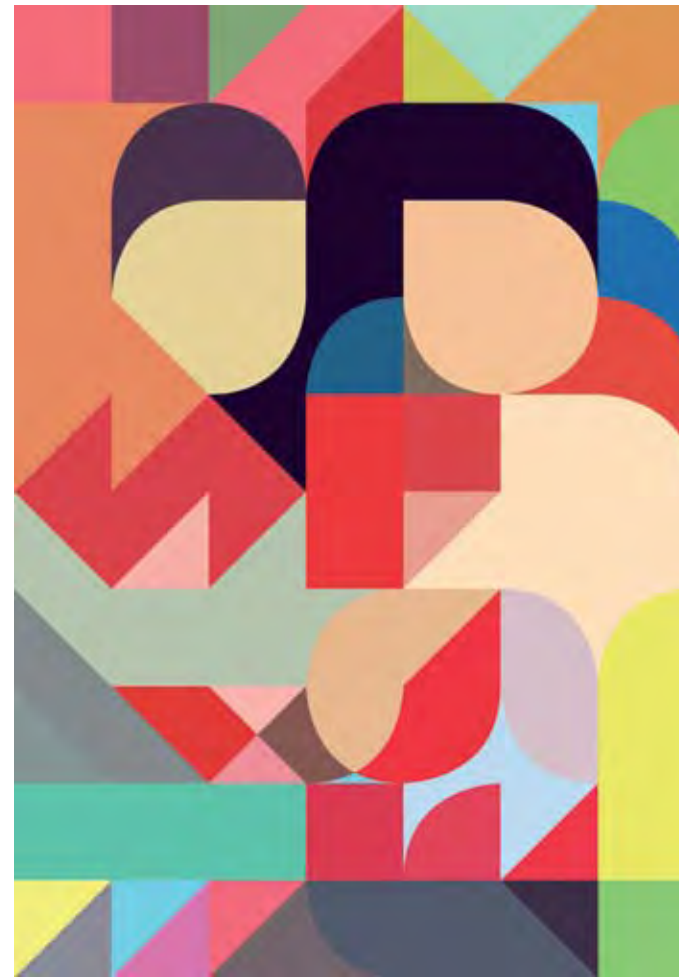
A BASKETBALL-LOVING ICELANDIC DESIGNER HUMBLY
REWRITES THE RULE BOOK.

Left:
Siggi Eggertsson
exclusive for XLR8R, 2010

A review of rising design star Siggi Eggertsson's work reveals a creeping interest in sports—portraits of athletes, a mosaic of basketball cards, a quilt bearing the likeness of Michael Jordan. Perhaps this is the Icelandic designer's secret—like an athlete, Eggertsson trains for originality.

Eggertsson carefully navigates the internet to avoid the influence of contemporaries, and takes annual sabbaticals to work in isolation. With only the basic system fonts on his computer, the 26-year-old designer creates specific type for each project he undertakes—whether it be for Urban Outfitters or designing the last Gnarl Barkley cover. His work strictly features muted, colorful geometrical shapes on a grid, but it's so engaging and original that it didn't take long for Eggertsson's growing list of clients—the likes of Coca Cola, the *New York Times*, and H&M—to notice. Here, we talk about rip-offs, the value of design, and obeying rules.

vanillusaft.com



Opposite:
London

This page:
Portraits (left),
Colorful Dream (right)

XLR8R: You are from Iceland. What about you is particularly Icelandic?

Siggi Eggertsson: Blond hair, blue eyes, and a silly accent.

You had to travel quite a bit before you ended up in Berlin, where you currently reside. Where have you been?

I spent 18 years of my life in Akureyri, my hometown, until I got sick of it and had to escape the small community. So I moved to Reykjavik to study graphic design, but it didn't take me long to get sick of that place, too. So I moved to New York to do an internship with [Hjalti Karlsson and Jan Wilker's design studio] Karlssonwilker for a couple of months. Then I had to move back to Reykjavik to continue my studies, but I was sick of my school, so I went to Berlin as an exchange student for one semester, and fell in love with the city. But I had to go back to Reykjavik to graduate, and then decided to move to London to focus on my illustration career. I was there for a year and a half, made a lot

of great contacts, and worked a lot, but wasn't really happy with my life, so I moved to Tálknafjörður, a random fishing village on the West Fjords of Iceland, population 200. I spent the summer there, thinking about what I wanted to do with my life, and realized I wanted to live in Berlin. It's great, and I'm not planning to move from there anytime soon.

Were you searching for something?

Not really, but now I have realized that the location isn't everything. A desk, my computer, and a good internet connection is pretty much everything I need to be happy.

What is the most beautiful thing you have ever experienced?

Coming back to Iceland after my internship in New York was kind of crazy. I was blown away by the nature, something I never cared for. I guess I had to move away from it to learn how to appreciate it.

How does your day begin?

I force myself out of bed, go to the kitchen, make some Earl Grey tea with way too much sugar, go to the studio, smoke, read some soccer gossip, and check if there is anything I need to be stressed about in my inbox. Then I drink more tea, with less sugar, open the documents from yesterday, and start working.

You recently compiled 400 pieces of work into an animation called A Growing Pile of Work, which received a lot of attention on the internet. In retrospect, how do you feel about your pile of work so far?

I think it's great; makes me happy. Getting paid to do what I enjoy the most is such a privilege.

When people describe your work, they often talk about a strict adherence to rules. What do you think they mean?

Well, I think they are pretty much spot on. I use a lot of rules in my work, a bit like recipes. I have no idea



why I work like this, but I've always been obsessed with simplifying, so working with rules and geometry comes quite naturally.

Do you ever just want to abandon those rules and do something different?

Not really, but my work is always evolving. I love discovering new ways to produce work, bending my own rules, but still staying within my grid.

You've just got a new commission. What do you do first?

I read over the brief and try to figure out what the client is after. Then I try to see it visually in my head—if I can make it work and look nice.

What if nothing comes to you right away?

It depends on the projects. If it's something I really want to do, but nothing is coming to my head, I either just sit and wait, force myself to come up with something, look in my sketchbooks, see if there is something old there that would make sense for the project. If that also fails, I start thinking if I should actually be doing the project.

Is there a recent project you would like to talk about? I'm wondering about how much you have to work with other people to bring these projects to completion.

Not really. I'm not that good at talking about my commercial projects. I usually get the most enjoyment working on my own self-initiated projects. Working with other people can be good and sometimes it leads to very good results, things I would never have done if I was just working on my own. But I've also burned myself

on that, when working with too many people with different ideas. And having to make too many compromises, it can result in a bad work.

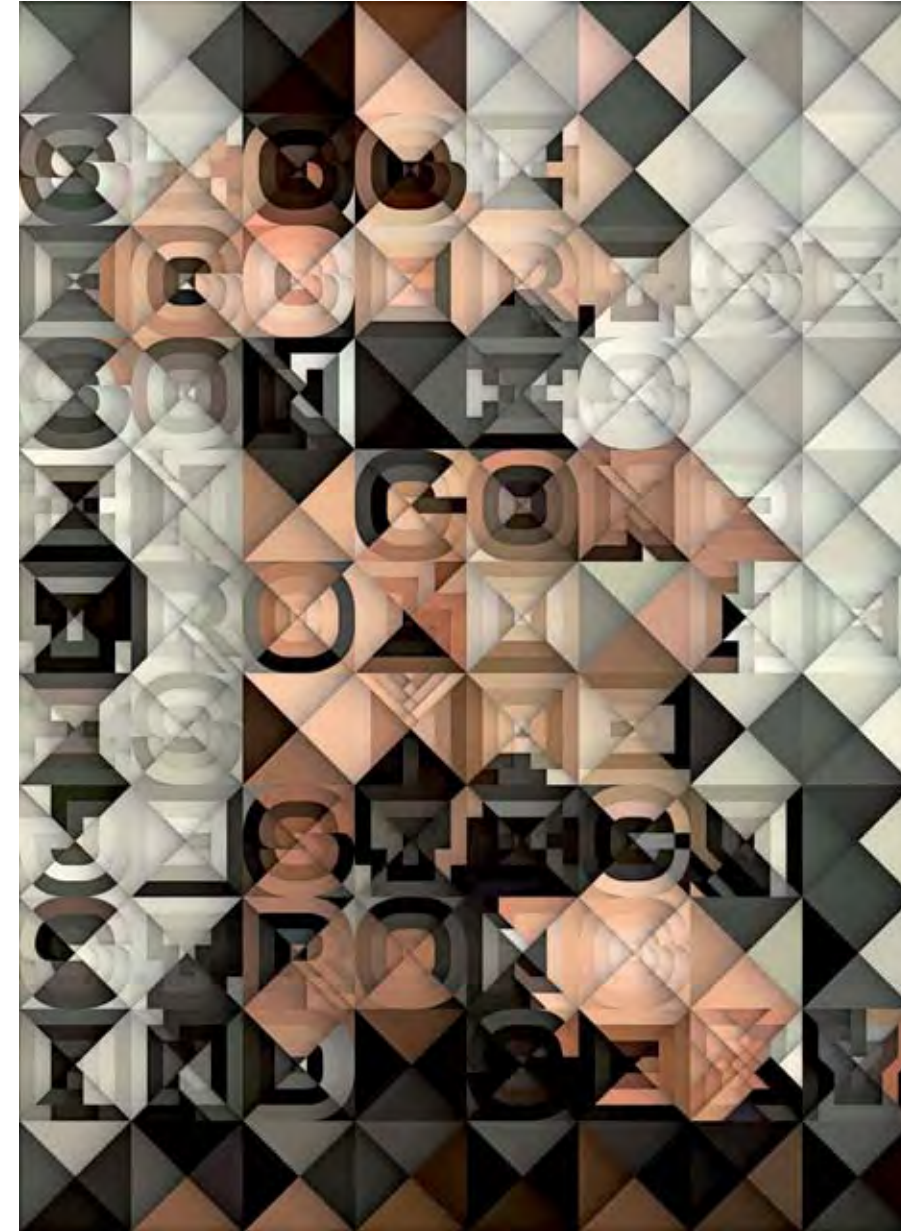
What music have you been listening to?

Yeasayer, Björk, Dan Deacon, Salem, Lil Wayne, Skream, Zombie Nation, Kanye West, Burial, Grizzly Bear, Pulp, Slagsmålsklubben, and Leatherface, but usually I just listen to The Beatles.

A shirt you designed for H&M was blatantly ripped off by an Australian company called T-Bar. What would you like to say to whoever is responsible for that?

You're in Australia. Go to the beach, have a beer, go to the zoo, check out some kangaroos. That's what I would do if I was having

Above:
[Talknafjordur](#)



Opposite:
[Chelsea Girls](#)

This page:
[Control](#)

a hard time coming up with ideas. But maybe the designer just had a stupid boss that told him to steal it. But it's crazy how far people will actually go.

Did they do a good job?

I've only seen a photo of it, but it looks like they spent a lot of time tracing it.

What value do designers bring to society?

I think it really depends on the designer, what field he works in, and what he cares about. But in general, I think they bring order and chaos.

Digital media is overtaking traditional print media. How do you think an increasingly digital future will affect you as a person and as a designer?

I kind of grew up with the internet, and owe a lot to it. Without digital media and the internet, I would definitely not be where I am today. Being able to present your work digitally is just a really great thing, and it gives so many people a chance that they didn't have before. It has and will continue to affect and inspire me as a person and designer. Instead of crying over the death of print, we should embrace digital media and see where it takes us.

What's a question you don't like to be asked in interviews?

You'd be amazed how many times I've been asked to explain how I do my work, technically.

Other than design, what can you do?

I used to play a lot of basketball when I was a kid, and I think I was quite good, probably due to my height, but when I started this design thing, it kind of took over my life and everything has been on hold since then.

REFLECTIONS ON THE WALL

TWENTY YEARS AFTER THE BERLIN WALL, **AGF**'S NEW PROJECT STRADDLES THE LINE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST, INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE.



Antye Greie has spent the past 20 years trying to make sense of the world she literally woke up to on November 9, 1989. Communist East German society raised her to believe that the Berlin Wall was justified for two decades—and on that fateful morning, both the Wall and her nation were gone. That experience often haunts her poetry and post-techno explorations as AGF, and it's explicit in her online audio poem, *Reflections on the Wall*, an oral history specked with shocks of mechanical noise and fragmented vocals. She spoke to *XLR8R* about the emotional walls she still climbs.
Cameron Macdonald

XLR8R: How did the idea for this project come about?

Antye Greie: I realized more than a year ago that it was going to be quite an anniversary for me... I spent 20 years in East Germany and another 20 years in the West... I was thinking about it for a very long time and wasn't sure how I would express everything or what I felt about it. I had set up the website a year ago and even looked for some funding because I wanted it to be an online project. I wanted it to be permanent, and [something] everybody could access... I called it *Reflections of the Wall Coming Down*, and one

day I was sitting in my office and I was staring at the wall and suddenly I saw an insane light... I was looking for where it was coming from and then I realized that it was the sun coming through the window going into a sparkling water bottle; the bubbles' sparkling made that light. It was amazing. I got the camera out and I recorded it, and realized these were reflections on the wall... I liked the idea of something very abstract to go along with a very personal memory.

What was your experience when the Wall actually came down?

The night it happened, I was in my favorite student club where I went almost every day. I was just drinking beer and dancing when somebody came in and yelled, "Hey, the Berlin Wall is down!" We all looked at him like he was stupid and insane... I think that maybe two people left and checked if it was true—or nobody bothered. I didn't bother—we just kept drinking, talking, and laughing. Then I went to bed. The next morning, I don't know if [I heard it] on TV or the radio, but it was a big shock.

Was there any sound or image that stayed with you over the years that sparked this project?

I'll never forget that image of driving by the Wall and seeing the West for the first time. If you didn't live in Berlin, you lived somewhere in the middle of East Germany. As a kid, you didn't know about all that stuff—you knew that we were in a Cold War and the evil West was trying to destroy us; that we had to be strong. This is how they brainwashed us and how I was raised... [But] it's just humans making stuff up like a border; they forbid other people to go from A to B... I just really realized that whole thing after the Wall came down, and I walked behind it and this is one of my strong memories: I first stood behind the Brandenburg Gate and I looked from the west side to the east side. This emotion and image I will never forget. Everything collapses in your brain...

AGF's *Reflections on the Wall* project can be viewed at mauer.poemproducer.com. Her latest album, *Einzelkaempfer*, is out now on AGF Produktion. poemproducer.com

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